

LOUISIANA Conservationist

July/August 1997 \$2.00

75 Years 1923 - 1997





Louisiana Conservationist
ISSN 0024-6778
Volume 49, No. 4
Baton Rouge, LA 70808



John Roussel, Assistant Secretary

Comments

The Department of Wildlife and Fisheries officially opened its long anticipated state of the art Booker Fowler Fish Hatchery in south Rapides Parish in June. Prior to the official opening, the facility had already produced 2.7 million Florida largemouth bass fry, signaling the beginning of a new era for the Department's hatchery program. The addition of the Booker Fowler facility not only increases the Department's fish production capacity, but also provides the opportunity to utilize a larger variety of spawning techniques.

Louisiana anglers should be pleased to note that with the new hatchery in full operation, the Inland Fisheries Division has plans to expand the number of waterbodies stocked with Florida largemouth bass around the state. Current plans also call for production of blue and channel catfish to replace the large individuals lost during Hurricane Andrew in 1992. The hatchery will also produce paddlefish and sturgeon.

The hurricane caused fish kills estimated at 200 million fish, severely impacting largemouth bass, channel catfish, blue catfish and flathead catfish populations. An estimated 4.5 million largemouth bass were killed.

The opening of this ultramodern facility is a giant leap for the Department, but it is important for all of us to remember that hatchery production and stocking of fish are just vital tools in fisheries management. We cannot forget that habitat manipulation, improvement and restoration are the first issues that need to be addressed. A high-tech hatchery will help the Department accelerate recovery of fish populations where habitat problems have been corrected and alter the genetic makeup of fish populations, such as introducing the Florida bass gene to some of our waters. This hatchery will give the Department the opportunity to address threatened and endangered species such as paddlefish, pallid sturgeon and gulf sturgeon by developing spawning techniques and implementing restoration efforts for these fish.

The bottom line is the Booker Fowler hatchery facility is not the solution to all of our fisheries' problems in Louisiana but it does provide an additional and valuable tool.

The \$13 million used to construct the facility was provided by Congress to mitigate damages caused by Hurricane Andrew.

The facility boasts 55 one-acre rearing ponds, 15 one-acre broodstock ponds, three smaller isolation ponds and 16 concrete raceways. The hatchery buildings include a spawning room, 40 fiberglass troughs, an egg incubation room and chemistry and diagnostic laboratories.

The hatchery was designed to be visitor friendly and includes a visitor center which is not yet completed.

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The *Louisiana Conservationist* is published bimonthly except January/February by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, 2000 Quail Drive, Baton Rouge, LA 70808, 504/765-2918. Second-class postage paid at Baton Rouge, LA and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: send address changes to Louisiana Conservationist, P.O. Box 98000, Baton Rouge, LA 70898.

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This public document was published at an average cost of \$51,751.60. Approximately 40,000 copies of this document were published at an average printing cost of \$23,910.44. The total cost of all printing of this document averages \$23,910.44. This document was published for Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, 2000 Quail Drive, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 70808, by Harvey Press, Inc., to provide information on outdoor opportunities in Louisiana. This material was printed in accordance with the standards for printing by state agencies established pursuant to R.S. 43:31. Printing of this material was purchased in accordance with the provisions of Title 43 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes.

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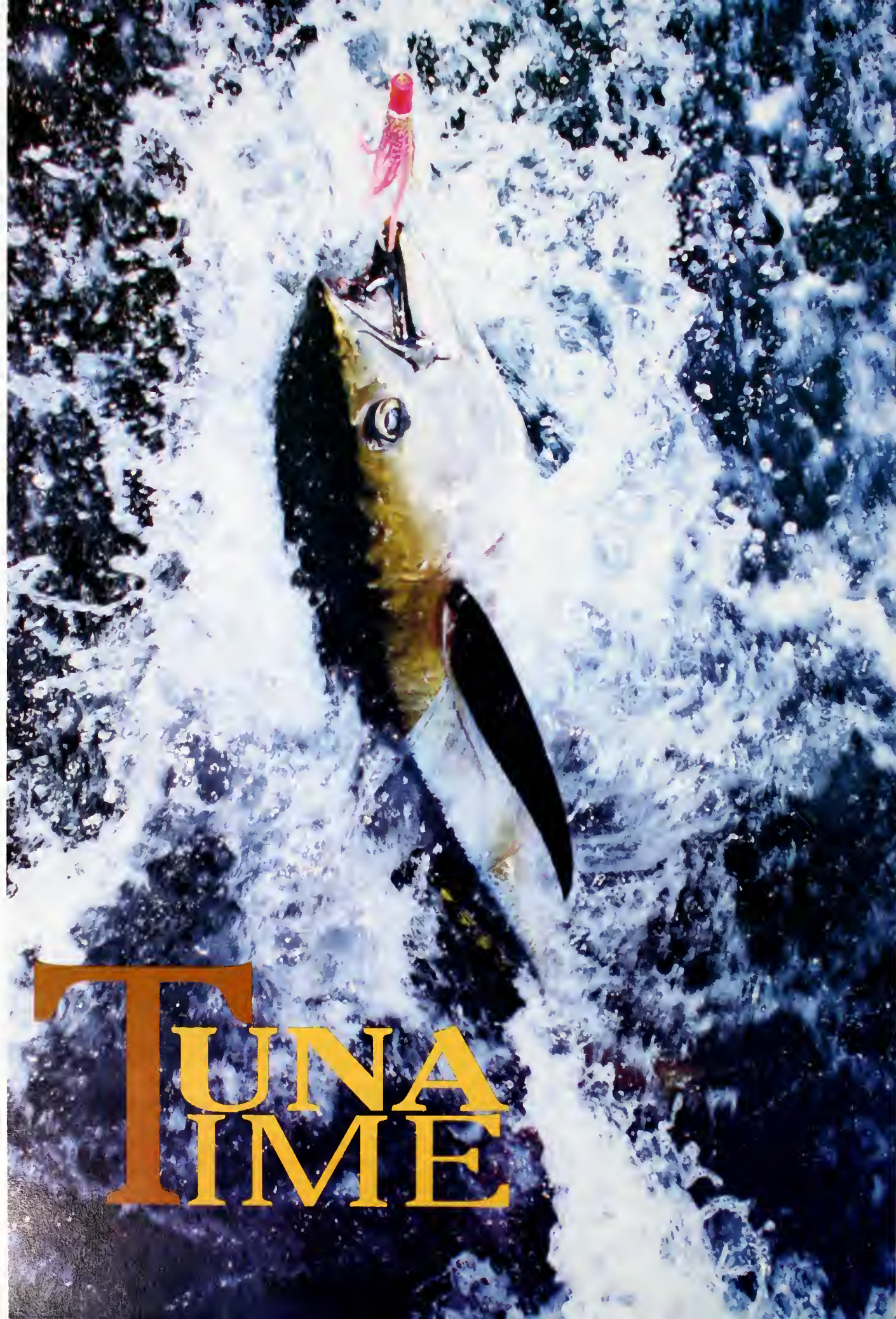
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Photo by Richard Hussar

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LDWF file photo



TUNA TIME

STORY & PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD HUSSAR

"We're hooked up again!" shouted an exhilarated Jerry Pearson.

Facing aft, you could see a 5-foot Tuna Stick bent double, its 50W Penn reel singing as a respectable fish tried desperately to sound.

"Don't touch the rods," commanded Pearson. "Let's see if we can catch em' two at a time."

I glanced forward into the cockpit, suspecting that Pearson must have hit his head on the rocket launcher. His eyes were glazed and a weird grin spread across his face. Adding to my concern was the fact that we were on a 25-foot Boston Whaler in 5- to 6-foot seas accompanied by blinding, nearly horizontal rain nearly 20 miles offshore...with only one 50-pound yellowfin on board. But Jerry did have a plan.

"We're on a bite," he said pointing up to the fish finder. "Look!"

Displayed as inverted red crescents, dozens of yellowfin were clearly visible on the color sonar. They were 40 feet down and right below an enormous school of baitfish. Pearson quickly cut the throttles to bare steerage. Just enough to keep the baits moving while avoiding undue pressure on the remaining hooked fish and line. Simultaneously, E. J. Delatte darted to the stern, snatched up the rod and firmly set the hook. As Delatte leaned back into the fish, angler Peter Richardson buckled him into a stand-up harness and belt.

Then the starboard outrigger snapped its clip and another reel started to scream. Now we had two respectable yellowfin to battle. This second yellowfin, however, was apparently destined for a higher purpose. In mere seconds the second fish blitzed 100 feet of line from the reel, then turned 180 degrees straight back to the boat and shook the hook. Undeterred, Pearson and Richardson quickly reeled in the remaining lines while I kept Pearson's boat, *Tuna Time*, moving forward and tight on the fish.

Once the rods were stowed, Delatte gave everyone the O.K. signal and began frantically winding line back on the reel. At the same time, I began to back down hard on the fish at about two knots. Paying strict attention to the line and incoming sea, I kept the angle of

the line nearly straight down off the port corner at about two o'clock. By doing so, Delatte never once had to shift his position and continued to put maximum pressure on his fish. In only two or three minutes the exhausted yellowfin began to spiral its way up and surfaced 20 feet away. As the fish continued to circle, I simply waited for the moment to make my move. On the third or fourth pass, I gunned *Tuna Time* backwards to "cut the pie" for a quick gaff shot and a trip to the ice box.

Total fighting time: less than seven minutes.

Yellowfin Bonanza

In the last 12 months, recreational anglers across south Louisiana have delighted in taking advantage of what was definitely a banner year for yellowfin tuna. Catches of three and four yellowfin tuna in the triple-digit range have been common. Accordingly, hundreds of novice anglers are now getting their first shot at catching these magnificent fish. Armed with Global Position Systems, sea surface temperature reports from earth imaging satellites, chum machines and circle hooks, extraordinary catches are reported daily.

"1997 is going to be a great year," boasted Capt. Jack Payne. "I fish out of Cypress Cove Marina in Venice and I've seen at least 30 new boats down there and everyone is boating tuna. Lots of guys just trying out their boats for the first time are pulling up to the dock with 100 pound yellowfin. The only downside to all this action is that for every yellowfin boated, two or three more usually get away.

Some of the best fishing action has been at the "Midnight Lump," an underwater mountain. It's located only 17 nautical miles SSW of Southwest Pass at 28-37.84N/89-33.18W. The Lump is said to be a salt dome and rises from the sea floor in 450 foot depths to within 210 feet of the water's surface. Whether trolling or anchoring while chumming tuna, the yellowfin have consistently been there.

"While fishing the lumps," Payne continued, "I've noticed that longliners using circle hooks rarely lose a fish. I switched and discovered that the hookset is just about fool-proof. When anchored up or drift fishing, I just free line my baits out about 50 feet and

Time-tested fishing techniques coupled with new technologies offer heart-pounding excitement.

When trolling for yellowfin Capt. Ed Washburn recommends the Magnum Rappala CD-18, yellow, Halco purple tremblers, and Rappala CD-14, red and white. The yellowfin tuna feeds about every four hours starting at sunrise and must eat its body weight in fish every day to survive.

set the rod in the rod holder. Once a fish takes the bait, I tell my customers to simply set the reel to strike and to pick up the rod once the fish has taken out 10 feet of line. The 16/0 hook will ride down the side of the fishes' jaw and punch a hole behind the jawbone every time. Also, if you plan to tag and release your yellowfin, it is the only way to go. Rarely will you foul or throat hook a fish with a circle hook.

"If you want to anchor up at the Lumps, bring along at least 600 feet of anchor rope stored in a rubber 50 gallon trash can and a medium sized float ball tied with half-inch line to a wide steel ring. These items will make setting and pulling up the anchor child's play. The trash can lets you pay out the anchor line safely and helps keep dangerous tangles out. When you decide to leave, run the anchor line through the steel ring and toss it and the ball over the side. Then simply run a few degrees port or starboard of where you set the anchor. The water friction on the poly ball will tug the anchor



up and ride the ball all the way to the anchor. All you gotta do then is reel in the slack and you're headed for home.

"My last piece of advice," concluded Payne, "is to wait those fish out. A yellowfin must eat his body weight in fish every day to survive and will feed at specific times during the day. I've noticed that the yellowfin will bite in about four hour intervals starting with the sunrise. There's been a few times I've been out there and you could have set your watch by the bite."

For a few insights into boat handling techniques when fighting big fish, I called up another fishing buddy, Ed Washburn. Owner of the pleasure craft *Humdinger*, Washburn is one of Louisiana's few skippers with a lot of experience at catching giant yellowfin and bluefin tuna. He was only too happy share his wealth of experience.

"When trolling for yellowfin," Washburn confided, "the first thing you need to do is switch out the hooks on your baits. Although the all-time best baits for yellowfin are the Rappala and Halco lures, neither manufacturer puts hooks on them that will stand up to a big fish. My advice is buy the Magnum Rappala CD-18s, green with tiger stripe and blue with silver, and also the Halco purple tremblers and immediately switch out the hooks to Mustad XXX 5/0 hooks. Regardless of how much or little drag you put on those fish, a big fish will bend factory hooks. Trust me.

"Another reason a lot of people lose big yellowfin is because they never put enough

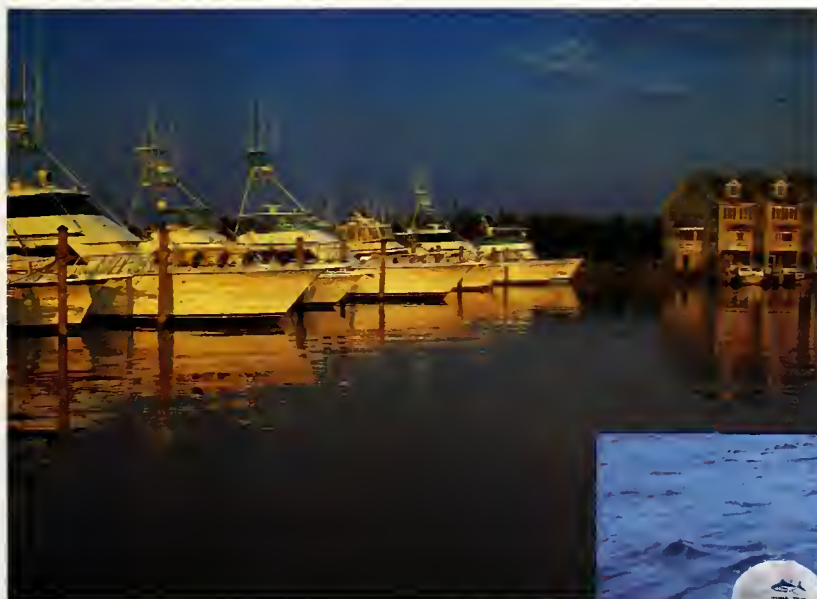


pressure on the fish. The average guy will hook up, stop the boat and fight the fish from a dead boat. With a good yellowfin, you're going to have to back down hard and fight him hard or you'll probably never see that fish. By watching your line angle and keeping it at about a 10 degree angle away from the boat, you can apply maximum pressure to the fish.

"Also, a big yellowfin will always spiral up to the boat when beaten. Unfortunately, this is the time when you lose most of your fish. The line has already taken a beating, the hook has usually worn a large hole in the fishes mouth and the angler is most definitely worn out. What you have to do when the fish surfaces is to pay attention. Depending on the size of the fish, most tuna will swim a 40 foot circle or more. When the fish makes a complete pass on the surface, back down directly across the circle and have your angler keep solid pressure on the fish. Most

of the time, the fish will plane straight up to the boat. And don't be afraid to gaff a big yellowfin. Just gaff him in the head (unless you intend to tag and release) and you'll control the fish. He may thrash his tail for a few seconds, but if you've got a good grip on the pole, that fish is going into your box. Using these techniques will shave minutes off your fighting time and you'll lose a lot less fish.

"Finally, for the high tech angler desiring a little edge, inexpensive sea surface temperature reports are now easily available and can provide recreational anglers with valuable information on prime yellowfin spots across the entire Gulf coast. One of the best services is offered by Gulf Weather Corp. at 888/463-4748. Available daily via downloads from the Earth Imaging Systems at the Stennis Space Center, these reports have become invaluable to me to successfully target yellowfin miles from the rip and other structures."



Many fishermen, trying out their boats for the first time, are catching tuna up to 100 pounds.

The past 12 months have been a banner year for yellowfin tuna with novice anglers getting their first experience in catching these majestic fish. Inexpensive sea surface temperature reports provide recreational anglers with valuable information on choice areas in the Gulf for yellowfin.



ISLAND CAMPOUT

STORY & PHOTOGRAPHY BY HUMBERTO FONTOVA

Some call this the “witching hour,” and I’d love to know why. I thought witches were ugly, bad? How anyone could call the scenery and sensations of sunset on a Louisiana barrier island ugly or bad is quite beyond me. We sit slumped in chairs with cool drinks in hand. A gentle breeze caresses our faces. This same breeze carries the aroma of fresh redfish steaks drenched in lemon butter and drizzling over driftwood coals not 10 feet away. Ghost crabs scurry on a little whirl of legs from hole to hole. Pelicans perform for free a hundred yards out in the Gulf.

“Watch, Robbie,” I alerted my son. I point to the surf. “There goes another one, wreeeennnn-SPLASH!” and the big bird plunges into another school of mullet.



The breeze was perfect for a barrier island campout. A cross breeze from the north-northwest. One of those summer fronts had pushed through. This coolish wind doesn't roil and dirty the surf, but it does sweep off the gnats and invigorate the spirit. If it feels good now, it'll feel even better during our nighttime foray for flounder in the shallows behind the island.

The Gulf met the grey, shell-speckled sand in gentle swells. Out in the water most ripples were from nervous pogies and shiners who cruised the surf in vast schools studied with little splashes. But these little eruptions don't seem to signal predators. They were more like crowded fish bumping into each other. "Hey pal!" one bug-eyed pogie would yell to the offender. "Watch your fin!"

This morning had been different. When we beached the boat the water almost looked like a newsreel of Omaha Beach with those little geysers ripping the surface as the boys splashed ashore. But these eruptions came from below. These were speckled trout, spanish mackerel and jack crevalles ripping into the pogies with mouths agape, often bursting into the air itself in their frenzy. Several hundred square yards of Gulf directly in front of our camp site was in turmoil from this frenzy.

And their frenzy provoked ours. The unloading could wait. Plenty of time later to pitch the tent. With all this driftwood it won't take ten minutes to gather a pile of firewood. We scrambled into the surf to our waists and started flinging purple jigs, aiming at the splashes and rippled patches of water.

"That's him!" Mikey howled from my right as he raised this rod. "Nice fish son." I could tell that from the swirl on the surface and the bend in his rod. My own dipped a second later, with a little drag-screach. "We're on em!" I roared. The fish set off on a vicious surface run that set my drag on permanent screach. Then the water erupted and he cartwheeled.

Tell me this: if tarpon on heavy tackle are prized almost above all else, why not ladyfish on ultra-light? Isn't it the same thing on a different scale?

I know. Forgive me. I'm applying logic to fishing. This is futile, even dangerous. Mini tarpon, we call them. And for the next 30 seconds he proved why, with a dazzling display of aerial acrobatics. Finally he flung the

jig right back at me with a gill-shaking leap and swam off.

My next retrieve stopped just ten feet in front of me with a brutal jerk. Then the spec hit the surface rattling his mouth like a tambourine, soaking me in the process. I didn't complain and was soon stringing him up behind Mikey's.

For better or for worse, Louisiana's coast is blessed with dozens of barrier islands. The better I've just mentioned. The "worse" is because these islands are stark reminders of what nature has in store for most of south-eastern Louisiana.

These islands are all that remains of vast river deltas. And most of southeast Louisiana is a delta. Which is to say, the result of sedimentation from the Mississippi.

For 7,000 or more years the Mississippi river whipped back and forth, east and west, like an unheld hose, spewing its fertile cargo of sediment and building most "land" we now see south of Lake Pontchartrain and Hwy 90.

The Chandeleur chain, which technically includes Breton and Gosier Islands, represent the ruins of something geologists call "the St Bernard delta lobe." Much like the weathered Acropolis in Greece or the battered Coliseum in Rome, these islands stand to remind us of a once vast and glorious empire.

But no blood was shed in this conquest. The antagonists were a mighty, free-flowing river laden with sediment from the fertile heartland of a continent and the salt water expanses of the Gulf of Mexico, its waves and tides allied with storms and hurricanes.

This was an epic more lopsided than Hannibal against Rome, than Cortez against the Aztec Empire. With both its hands free, with no levees shackling it, the river made modest but heroic claims against the Gulf. Go to the mouth of the Atchafalaya River and you'll see this process at work today. The only place it's still at work in Louisiana.

Century by century the river expanded its claim. Then it would get bored, switch its course and start on another "delta lobe" maybe off what is now Bayou Lafourche, or maybe over to Grand Caillou. The Gulf would immediately mount a counter-offensive against the undefended delta. The Isles Dernieres, Timbaliers and Grand Isle itself are all remnants of these struggles.

The Gulf used to take hundreds of years to



Surf fishing for speckled trout off Pelican Island, a small island south of Empire, is both challenging and rewarding. This angler's catch will soon be sizzling over the campfire.

make substantial headway in destroying the river-built deltas. Now it's decades. The Chandeleurs are about 3,000 years old. They resulted from the sediment left by the Mississippi when it followed the same path we now take to Hopedale or Shell Beach instead of the path we take to Pointe La Hache. By that I mean that instead of hanging a sharp right at Poydras the river once went straight east and pretty much followed the course now taken by Bayou La Loutre.

Ride down Bayou La Loutre from Hopedale to Stump Lagoon and you'll get a feel for what this area must have looked like all the way to the Chandeleur chain's beachfront in prehistory. Imagine stands of live oaks all the way out to Morgan Harbor. Imagine cypress trees studding the landscape to the mouth of the jetties. Rosseau cane and bachiris blanketing everything to Point Chicot. Herds of deer watching you from a glade of alligator grass near Mud-Grass island. Ducks lifting in great clouds from every puddle. Geese by the tens of thousands lifting with that jet roar, not from a rice field near Gueydan, but from a cord-grass prairie where a well-jacket now stands in 12 feet of open water. Best yet, imagine no nutria. If you don't choke up you're a better man than I.

Our campsite at the mouth of Bayou Scofield, below Empire, wasn't even an "island" 30 years ago. It was always called

Pelican Island but it wasn't a barrier island as such, simply the shoreline of a vast salt to brackish marsh which stretched from the River at Buras to the Gulf. Most of this marsh is gone. We see expanses of water on all sides, we even see the tops of some tankers chugging up the Mississippi.

But this isn't the place or time to dwell on the melancholy subject of coastal erosion. The aroma from the redfish steaks has us ravenous. The flounder await. The trout and mackerel from the surf fishing need more ice. If this erosion has to be inevitable, let's make the best of it. For us it means a much shorter boat ride for an island camp out.

To reach Breton or the Chandeleurs from either Hopedale, Venice or even

Gulfport or Bay St Louis, we're talking a lengthy boat ride, most of it over the open waters of Breton Sound, a shallow body known to kick up into a murderous cauldron of waves during summer squalls. Add lightning and blinding rain and we're talking about a truly interesting boat ride.

It took us about 15 minutes to get here from Buras, following channel markers and oyster poles. The same type of camping is available from Sandy Point around to Four Bayou Pass near the mouth of Barataria Bay. Simply launch anywhere from Happy Jack to Venice and head for the Gulf. Watch your depthfinder for oyster reefs.

This is the remnant of a sand coastline turned into a series of islands by relentless erosion, mainly over the last 30 years. What we like about these camp-outs are the options. Surf fishing is always the premier attraction on these trips, but what if the wind whips around and muddies the surf? What if the trout, for any of their number of unfathomable reasons, contract lockjaw? At many places, you're skunked. Here, however, we might venture out to the shallow West Delta rigs to catch spanish mackerel with white jigs or shiny spoons. We might fish these rigs for mangrove snapper using live pogies or coca-hoes captured near our campsite with cast net or minnow trap. We might fish the marshes and oyster beds behind the island with the classic popping cork/shrimp-

tipped-jig combo for reds, trout, drum and sheepshead. We like those options. It means we never come home empty handed. One way or another we'll catch fish.

Ideally you want a north wind on these trips. If you can plan it for a full moon and rapidly falling tide at night the floundering will be exceptional instead of just good.

Every surf fisherman hears about so-and-so who got perforated by stingrays while surf fishing, or so-and-so dragged out to sea, gurgling piteously, his free hand beckoning desperately for succor after a shark grabbed his stringer. Campfires and imagination spawn 90 percent of these stories, not actual events.

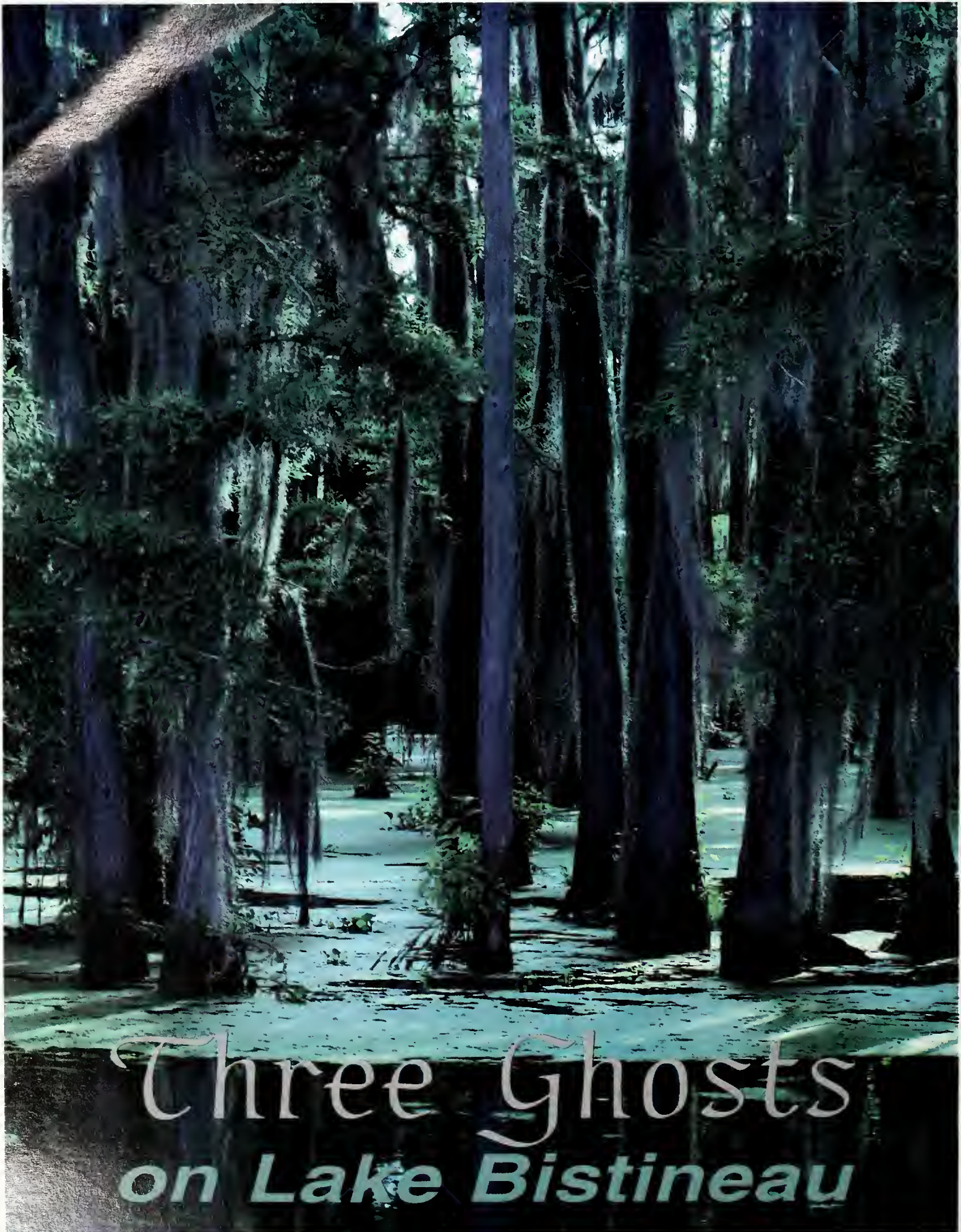
A shuffling gait as you wade has always been recommended to frighten off any stingrays in your path. I've never been stung, nor has anyone I know. So I guess it works. Small sharks are much more common nowadays on the east side of the river than on the west. We've seen them but never been bothered by them. Just get out if they show up.

Lastly and most importantly is the issue of gnats and mosquitoes. They can turn these trips into a nightmare. But they don't have to. Keep the tent zipped up *at all times*. Drive this theme into the kids' heads during the whole ride down. Start screaming about it a few days in advance. Put it on the bulletin board. On the refrigerator. *Nothing* is as important on a island campout in summer. Even if it's windy — especially if it's windy — mosquitoes and gnats will infest your tent through the smallest crack. During the day the wind keeps them at bay. In the evening, break out the Skin-So-Soft, grab some refreshment, keep close to the fire (a little seaweed or grass will generate a touch of bug repelling smoke) look into your kids' eyes and savor the images and happy fatigue from the day's events. 🐞



A young angler hooks and lands a large sheepshead in the surf off Pelican Island. Sheepshead tend to congregate in nearshore waters during late winter and early spring. Since their mouths are relatively small but very strong, a small stout hook works best. Sheepshead tend to nibble at the bait with their notched incisor teeth and an angler must be quick to set the hook.





LDWF file photo

BY HENRY CABBAGE

Dad would have loved it if he could have been there. In a way he was, or at least his ghost was. Forty-two years after Dad taught my brother Don and me how to fish on Lake Bistineau, I called my brother and asked him if he would like to meet me in Shreveport and fish the lake once more.

"Yes! Yes! A thousand times, yes!" he said.

Charles Hoenke, the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries biologist who monitors Lake Bistineau, said the lake is in pretty good shape these days. He said it has a tremendous largemouth bass population and a few Kentucky bass. It also has a few spotted bass and a stocked population of hybrids.

"But it can be a hard lake to fish," he adds. "You need to fish it every day if you want to understand the habits of the fish population there, especially bass."

Hoenke, who grew up "on, in and around Lake Bistineau," said it is widely recognized as a favorite spot for white and black crappie anglers year-round, but especially during the winter months. Last year's 5.5 foot drawdown, followed by a massive flood, actually boosted the productivity of the

lake's food chain, although not exactly as planned. Fluctuations in water levels may cause temporary inconvenience to anglers, but constant water levels disrupt the natural character of a lake, leaving gaps in the food chain and causing aquatic weed problems.

"It's in good shape now," he said.

Don drove from El Paso, TX, with his friend Wayne Gilbreath, who lives in Socorro, NM. I drove from Tallahassee, FL, and we arrived at about the same time – a little before dark, but we didn't have a pre-arranged rendezvous point. We planned to camp during the two-day fishing trip. Fortunately, Don found a good spot at Bronco's Marina and called me on my cellular phone to have me meet him at Taylor's Store so he could lead me to the campsite. Everything fell into place.

Even as I set up my tent in the dark, the ghosts of my long-departed father and the two little boys who learned to merge with nature there so long ago were all around us. It was even more so the next morning when I saw the tall cypress trees looming over the lake's chocolate colored water. It was so distantly familiar, as if the lake was still a part of me, and I was part of it after so many years.

With a bucket of shiners, a container of red wigglers and an assortment of tackle my



Lake Bistineau is well stocked with largemouth bass and is a favorite spot for white and black crappie anglers. The lake also has Kentucky bass, spotted bass and a stocked population of hybrids.



Bass fishing under duckweed (top photograph) with the right lure can often result in the catch of the day. Unweighted plastic lures are the bait of choice. Small gigs fished in tight cover (bottom photo) are very productive for crappie fishing.



father had never dreamed of, we boarded a boat from the fish camp that locals call Miss Julie's Place.

Miss Julie is a charming lady who runs the rustic camp, renting boats and offering cheap lodging to anglers and others. She usually has a pot of coffee brewing and a pile of boiled crawfish on the table for anybody who wants to help himself. She obviously disapproved of the fact that I don't put Louisiana hot sauce on my hush puppies. Her facial expression made that clear enough when I mentioned that I don't like hot sauce during a cordial chat with her and her patrons, but she seemed to like me well enough to forgive that single character flaw.

In the small aluminum rental boat with Don and Wayne, I roamed the 17,000 acre impoundment, reliving the experiences that enriched my childhood and Don's on Lake Bistineau.

"That might be where you fell into the water off the dock that time," Don said, pointing to one of the fish camps on the northern shore of the lake, somewhere near Birds Island.

Maybe it was. I wanted to believe it was, but I couldn't tell. Things had changed so much since 1955.

"I caught my first bass on this lake," Don said. "I wonder if it was around here somewhere."

I was glad his mind was racing with the same recollections as mine was. After a few unsuccessful attempts at bream fishing in spots recommended by some of the seasoned anglers at Miss Julie's place, we finally found a spot that looked promising and tied up to a cypress stump. We had a map from a 1973 issue of the *Louisiana Conservationist*. It told us this was a deep spot in the lake. It was late March, and we figured the bream would be in deep water.

I was going to teach these two western boys how to catch fish in a Louisiana lake. With the cold confidence of a professional tournament superstar, I tied an array of lures onto the rods and reels I had brought along, affixing each with an improved clinch knot. I tied a tiny hook onto my bream buster and set the bobber at six feet, then hooked a lively shiner just behind the dorsal fin.

"You might want to hook him behind the eyes," Don said. "When you hook them like

that, they move around a lot, but sometimes the fish just bite the shiners' heads off and don't get their mouths onto the hook."

"We'll see," I said, silently dismissing the suggestion. The man lives in a desert, and he was telling me how to catch a fish? Hah!

Don shrugged and dropped his line into the water. He didn't even have a bobber. No wonder he couldn't catch a fish.

Within two minutes, Don was landing a nice red belly (redbreast sunfish) and immediately became an expert. Then he pulled in another one — a bluegill this time. No sooner had he baited his hook with another red wiggler than he landed another red belly.

"Maybe I need to try one of those worms," I said. I also removed my bobber, hoping nobody would notice this admission that I had miscalculated the proper depth for prevailing conditions. Anglers have to be flexible.

Almost immediately, I felt a tug on my bream buster when I plunked it into a spot close to where Don was having so much luck. It wasn't a large fish, but it was a spirited one, and I landed the white creature with black stripes along its sides.

"What is that, a crappie?" Don asked.

"Striped bass," I answered.... "No, it's a hybrid (cross between a striped bass and a white bass). See the way the lines are broken? It's a hybrid."

Wayne and I managed to land a few more bream and bass while Don seemed on the verge of setting a world record. It was a nightmare. Here was this desert dweller saying things to me like: "You need to try over there by that stump." That was the kind of thing Dad used to say. It's what Dad would have told me then if his ghost could talk.

I tried everything...Rat-L-Trap, plastic worms, Beetle Spin, deep diving lures, crank baits, live baits...absolutely every device I could think of. I even tried the bass fisherman's secret weapon — placing a live worm onto a weedless hook like anglers hook plastic worms. I caught fish okay, but Don out-fished me with incredible ease.

"Why don't you pitch your line over there by that log," he said.

I complied, and of course, caught the biggest bream of the day.

At last, the sun started to approach the horizon and we headed back to the camp

with a cooler full of fish. The feast that night was superb, fresh fried bream and hybrid bass with hush puppies made simply from corn meal, a little salt and a can of beer (the alcohol in the beer disappears during cooking, but it gives the hush puppies a light texture inside). We were famished, and nothing tastes better when you're hungry than fish right out of the water. We gorged ourselves and invited others to join us. That's the way it's done at Lake Bistineau. We did it that way with Dad, 42 years ago.

The next day, the wind was unkind to us and our fishing efforts produced little, but that was okay. We had fished Lake Bistineau. We had explored its reaches with Dad at our sides once again. I know Dad's spirit joined us, and when he saw us land a fish, he said, "That's my boys."

When we broke camp, and my brother and I embraced for the good-bye, Don turned to the lake, and I heard him say, "Thanks Dad, and thanks Lake Bistineau."

"Oh yes," I said. "Thanks."

Tears welled in my eyes as I took one last glance at the lake in my rear view mirror and headed home.

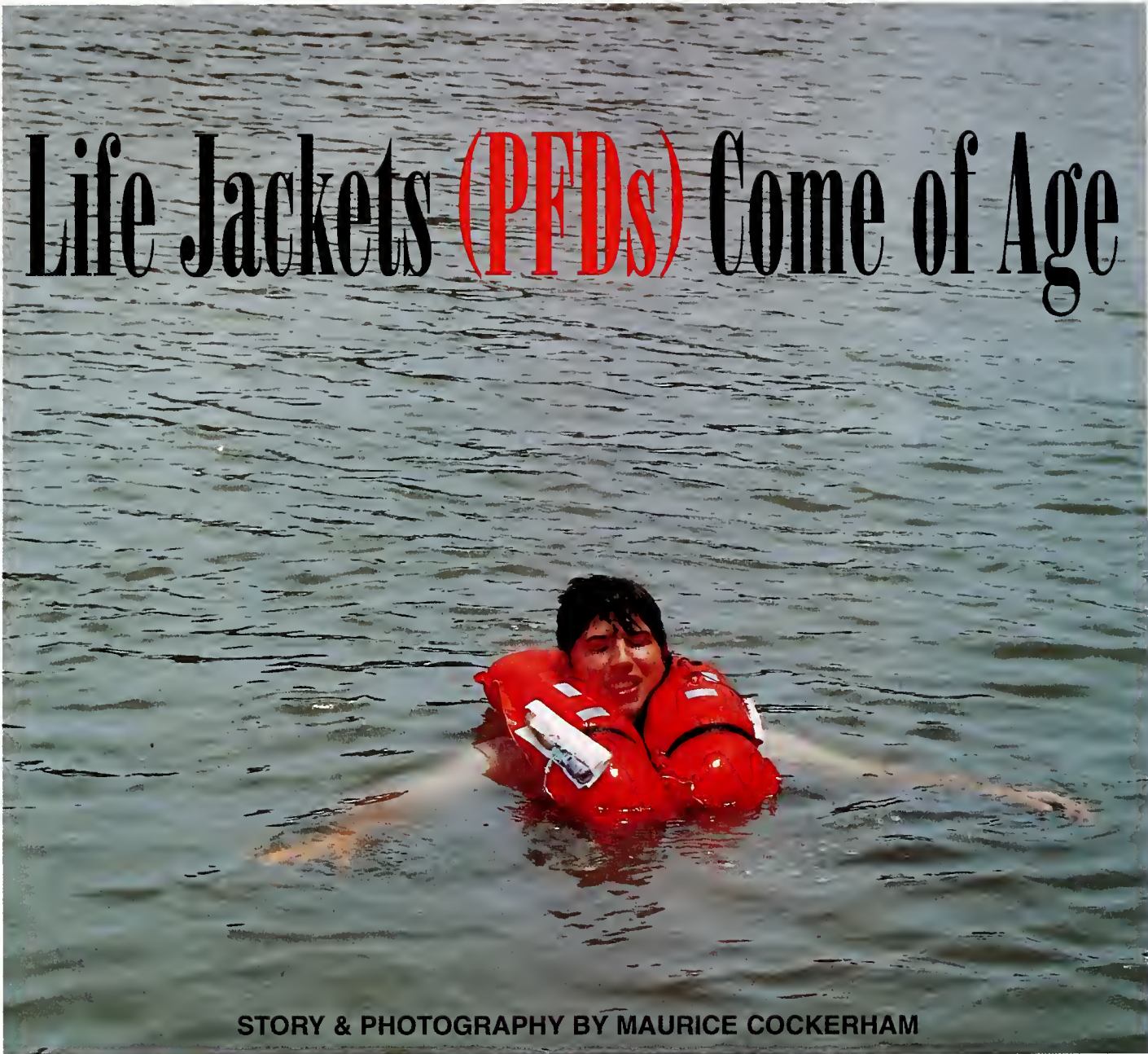
Thanks, Dad. 🍷



Photo by Henry Cabbage

Lake Bistineau, located in the northwest Louisiana uplands, is an impoundment covering approximately 17,200 acres. The lake was created in 1938 when an earthen dam was constructed across Bayou Dorcheat approximately 10 miles west of Ringgold.

Life Jackets (PFDs) Come of Age



STORY & PHOTOGRAPHY BY MAURICE COCKERHAM

The U.S. Coast Guard, the nation's guiding hand for safety in things nautical, has finally taken a tentative and long-overdue step toward addressing one of the most serious problems in boating.

It is no secret that the most valuable single item in a boater's safety arsenal is a properly fitted life jacket. OK, the new term is Personal Flotation Device, or PFD, but they are still life jackets to the majority of Louisiana's two-million-plus boaters. The "PFD" moniker is simply a fancy term that appeals mostly to arm chair admirals and dockside skippers.

It is also no secret that, despite ongoing educational efforts and safety campaigns, most boaters still do not wear a life jacket. The most common excuses are, "They're too hot," and "They're too bulky." Unfortunately, both charges are true.

The inevitable result is that most boaters simply avoid wearing that invaluable device if there is any choice at all. Oh, sure, they force the kiddies to wear one sometimes, particularly if the water cops are in the neighborhood, and they'll launch a frantic scramble to snatch one out of a storage locker and get it on if the boat is sinking or if the weather turns really sour (and there is enough time before it is too late). Trouble is, most boating fatalities involve people who fall overboard in good weather, from small boats, and *who are not wearing a life jacket!* In 1994, for example, 784 people died in recreational boating accidents and 616 of them drowned. Fully 88 percent of those drowning victims, 540 souls, were not wearing life jackets. Most, if not all, would quite likely still be alive had they been wearing one.

Boaters now have a choice that is neither too hot, nor too bulky. The U.S.C.G. has finally approved the use of compact, CO₂ activated, inflatable life jackets. If you've never used one of these jewels, you are in for a definite and pleasant surprise. Folded inside a protective cover and equipped with a nylon harness, the inflatable hangs around your neck like a small, light horseshoe collar. It is not in the way when you need to fish, or weigh anchor, or adjust sails, nor does it act as an upper body sauna suit. You hardly know it's there. Yet, when needed, it inflates almost instantaneously to provide as much or more buoyancy than a traditional foam or kapok filled device.

The inflatable life jacket is not a new item. The military began using it about the time of the Second World War. It was called a Mae West. (Never mind why.) Airlines and other flying services have used them with FAA approval for decades. All the military services routinely use them on aircraft and boats. They've also been available to private boaters, both recreational and commercial, for more than a decade. They were not, however, Coast Guard Approved. That meant boaters who elected to use inflatables still had to have a serviceable, approved life jacket "readily accessible" for each person on board.

And the Coast Guard was not of a mind to consider approving inflatables, primarily because they require routine inspection and maintenance by users. The coasties just didn't trust the average boater to meet that responsibility. That same concern has been voiced by Lt. Col. Charlie Clark, Louisiana's Boating Safety Law Administrator and second in command in the Wildlife and Fisheries Enforcement Division.

"The inflatable device is particularly fragile and requires routine inspection and maintenance. Unlike the traditional PFD that can be inspected at a quick glance, the inflatable also demands a periodic inflation test to ensure its serviceability."

They have a point, but the boaters who refuse to maintain an inflatable are quite likely among the same boaters who simply refuse to wear conventional life jackets. They are the same boaters who will have bulky, unadjusted and perhaps rotted life jackets stuffed in the

bilge or a storage locker when they need them. It is impossible to completely idiot-proof the issue, and those of us who will properly maintain inflatables and wear them conscientiously, should have that option.

In addition, inflatables have never been promoted or advertised extensively by the manufacturers. They were, and still are, a bit more expensive than a hot, bulky, traditional life jacket and they never had that all-important "U.S. Coast Guard Approval." Most boaters still are unfamiliar with them and that's a shame.

Anyway, it took a lengthy lobbying effort by Boat U./S. and other organizations concerned with reducing boating fatalities to literally force the issue.

I bought my first inflatable eight years ago. I wasn't one of those macho types who simply refuse to wear a life jacket. I *believe* in life jackets. I learned my lesson by wrecking a boat back when PFDs were still officially called life jackets...and I wasn't wearing one. I got up-close and personal with the Grim Reaper that day and have no trouble admitting I became a true believer on the spot. I am, however, in full agreement with those who label traditional jackets too hot and too bulky. My inflatable cured both problems immediately.

There are two basic types of inflatable life jackets available now. The difference is in the method of activation. Rightfully, they are labeled either automatic or manual.

The manual unit contains a reinforced air bladder compactly folded into a protective



Inflatable PFDs are available from a number of manufacturers in various configurations.

cover. Permanently attached to the bladder is a triggering device into which a small metal CO₂ cylinder is screwed. A nylon lanyard is attached to the triggering device. Pulling the lanyard forces a metal pin to perforate the sealed neck of the cylinder. Carbon dioxide gas escaping into the bladder does the rest. At least five companies are now producing and selling manually activated inflatables with U.S. Coast Guard Approval. Additional companies have inflatables undergoing testing

The automatic model is identical to the manual unit except for the triggering device. In this unit, the pin is under spring pressure and is held away from the CO₂ cylinder by a water sensitive "pill." With exposure to water, the pill disintegrates or collapses within seconds and the

To demonstrate the operation of an automatic vest, our volunteer "falls" from a dock into the water. As the water dissolves the "pill" in the firing mechanism a few seconds later, the CO₂ begins to fill the inflatable bladder. (The bladder can be seen erupting from the cover on the "victims" right shoulder in photo three.) When fully inflated, this particular inflatable PFD provides more flotation than a traditional Type One Offshore Vest.



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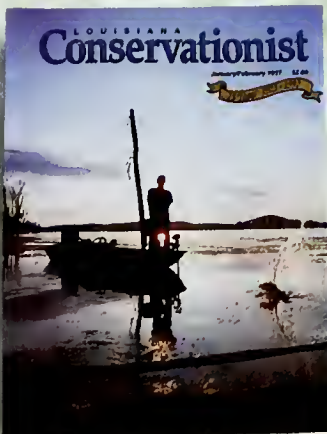
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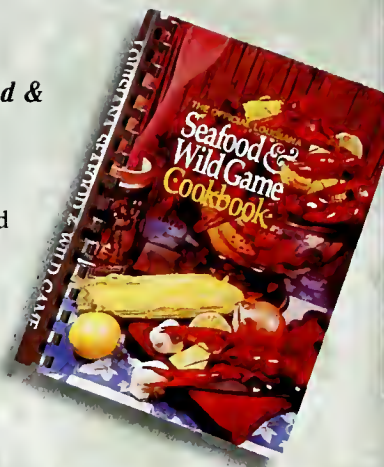
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| 207 Striped bass | 331 Bald eagle | 527 Crawfish |
| 209 Tarpon | 342 Pelican | 531 Crab |
| 211 Speck (weakfish) | 345 Great blue heron | 571 Luna moth |
| 214 Redfish | 350 Hummingbird | 591 Tree frog |
| 217 Swordfish | 351 Dove | 600 Alligator |
| 219 King mackerel | 360 Horned owl | 607 Sea turtle |

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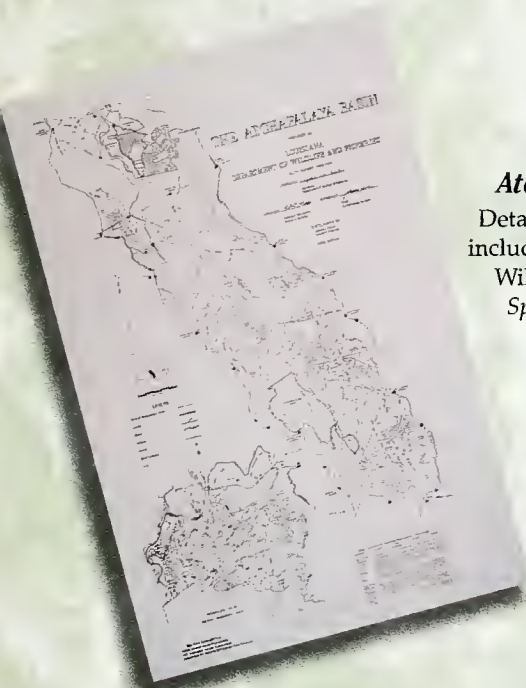
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| M140 Bass | M321 Mallard | M420 Buck |
| M304 Woodcock | M329 Quail | M530 Lobster |
| M308 Grouse | M333 Eagle | M531 Crab |
| M309 Turkey | M400 Buck head | M600 Alligator |
| M320 Canada goose | M405 Bear | M702 Arrowhead |

Not actual size



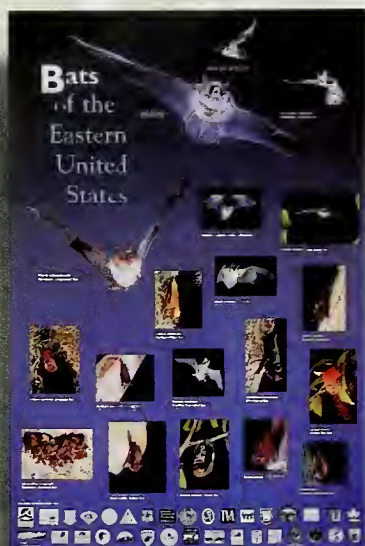
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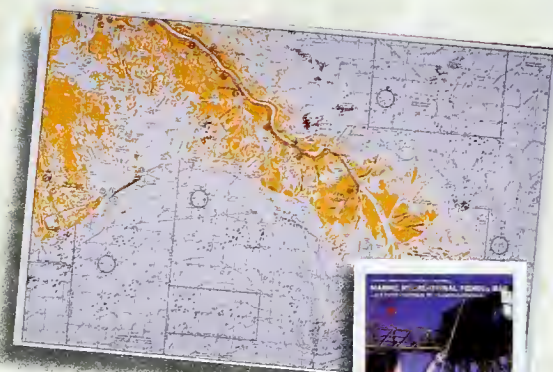
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pin drives forward to puncture the neck of the gas cylinder. This unit is also equipped with a lanyard and can be manually activated. Although various brands are undergoing testing, as of March 1997, NO AUTOMATIC INFLATABLES HAVE RECEIVED COAST GUARD APPROVAL. That means if you elect to use an automatic inflatable, you must still carry on board a traditional approved life jacket.

Both units also provide a separate inflation tube with a one-way air valve. This tube is intended for use in annual inflation testing or in the unlikely event you end up in the brine and, for whatever reason, the CO₂ cartridge or triggering device fails. You simply blow into the tube. You can also maintain inflation despite a minor puncture to the bladder.

As I mentioned earlier, inflatables do require more care and attention than their passively bulky predecessors. That translates into personal responsibility. If you aren't responsible enough to properly maintain the thing, you'd be best advised not to buy one.

Be sure you keep the instruction sheet or booklet that comes with your unit. It provides detailed information about cleaning, testing and refolding your particular model.

At least twice each year the unit should be orally inflated. Leave it inflated overnight to check for air loss. If it loses air, return it to the manufacturer immediately! Be sure you deflate the bladder completely following this test. Air left in the bladder could result in a "blow out" when the CO₂ inflates the device. You must also be sure you use the right CO₂ cylinder for your inflatable. Once again, read that instruction booklet. A 21 gram cylinder will "blow out" an inflatable designed for a 16 gram cylinder.

You must also remove the CO₂ cylinder during testing and make sure it still contains its gas and it is not rusted or damaged. If you have any doubts at all, replace the thing. The cylinders are not expensive.

This is also the time to work the triggering mechanism to be sure it operates freely.

Finally, you re-set the trigger, replacing the water-soluble "pill" on automatic models (This pill should also be replaced if the inflatable has been exposed to excessive airborne moisture, such as fog or rain. Failure to do so could result in an unexpected and quite startling inflation.), and replace the CO₂ cylinder.

Screw it down firmly, but don't overdo it. Replace the plastic safety lock and you are ready to refold the bladder, fasten the cover with the manual inflation lanyard exposed, and head for the water. Also, keep a spare CO₂ cylinder or two and a couple of "pills" with your on-board safety/first aid equipment.

Some manufacturers also offer a "belt-pac" model. Problem is, you have to inflate the thing in the water and then try to put it on over your head. In rough water or cold weather, or both, that could be a really serious problem. I would not recommend that type of device to anyone.

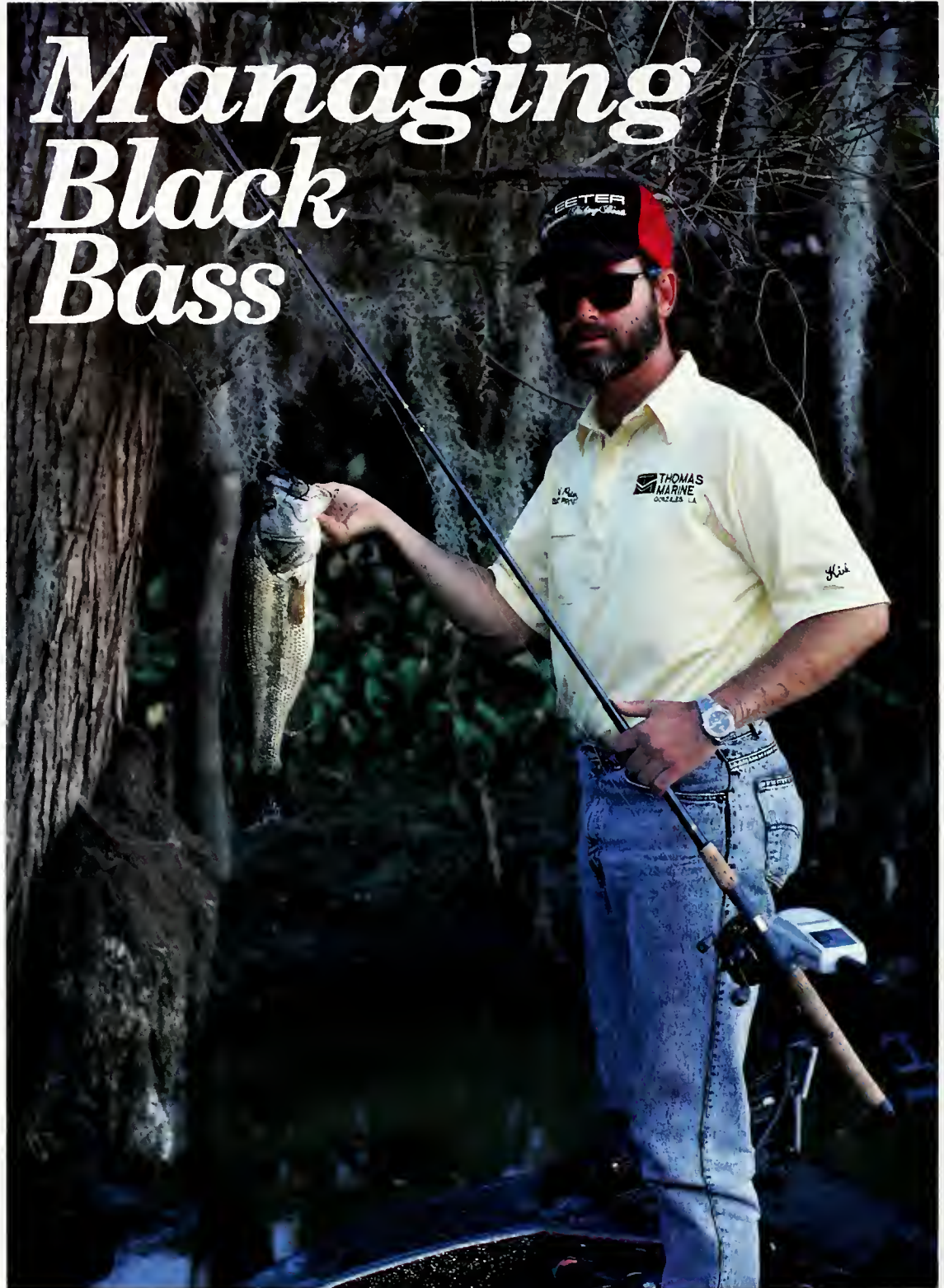
Very similar inflatable life jackets are available from SOSpenders, Mustang, Coral, Sterns and other manufacturers. One important recommendation: Look at the buoyancy label on each model. Pass over the lightly constructed models offering 23-25 lbs. of buoyancy. Go with the top-of-the-line models offering slightly heavier air bladder construction and 35-37 lbs. of buoyancy. That extra lift can be awfully important in open water on a bad day. In addition, the heavier construction means durability.

I must also note that the Coast Guard still refuses to approve use of inflatable life jackets by persons under the age of 16. Sam Wehr, of the Coast Guard's Life Saving and Fire Safety Standards Division, has been quoted as saying, "We felt we needed to get a little experience under our belts with the adult sizes before we approved inflatables in children's sizes." Unfortunately, instead of learning to comfortably wear a life jacket at all times while afloat, youngsters will still learn to hate them. Go figure.

But progress has been made, and I predict public pressure will result in USCG approved inflatables for youngsters in the near future.

Inflatables do cost more. Once you have used one, however, you will quickly find the cost more than justified. Most of us will spend just as much, if not more, on a new rod and reel or a new pair of skis, or other non-essential equipment. Besides, try that money argument on someone who has been pitched into the drink without warning and in a real crisis situation. Those of us who have survived such experiences happen to be the real authorities on just what a life jacket is worth when it is truly needed. I trust my inflatable, and I WEAR it! 🐬

Managing Black Bass



in the **Atchafalaya Basin**

STORY & PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRIS BERZAS

Make no mistake about it, the bass were there.

We were throwing white and chartreuse buzzbaits in a canal just south of Myette Point landing on the western border of the Atchafalaya Basin. The bass were holding on the points of breaks and coves, a pattern that held for more than three hours after sunrise.

Later, tequila and red-shad worms also delivered fish. Leaving the points, the largemouths had moved into cover all along the canal. They were there in numbers leaving my brother and I to go through at least two 20-count packs of plastic worms.

When it was all over, we happily reminisced over the experience. We battled with over 30 bass with the lagnappe of six keepers well above the 14-inch minimum length. It was one of our finer trips to the Basin, one that had us planning another trek the following weekend.

Of course, we were fishing a management success story, as most Basin bass anglers would certainly attest. However, such success has been painstakingly designed, managed and achieved by professionals within the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF). The effort also involved long-term, intensive support provided by hundreds of Louisiana bass fishermen who willingly supported catch and release fishing for an extended period. Those fishermen also harvested mature bass from undamaged areas of Louisiana and provided those fish for restocking in the basin by LDWF fisheries biologists.

It's a hallmark study, a five year project beginning with one of the most devastating natural disasters ever wreak havoc upon our beloved Sportsman's Paradise.

Louisiana will always remember Tuesday, Aug. 25, 1992 — the day Hurricane Andrew swept ashore on the Bayou State's coastline, bringing with it winds clocked at 140 mph at its peak and winding down to 65 mph before leaving the vicinity of the Atchafalaya Basin.

Literally tons of freshwater fish in the path of Andrew's winds were dead, victims of the storm winds' impact as the Basin's water tables were roiled to depths that were never witnessed before. The churning effects of Andrew's winds had stirred up tons of oxygen consuming decomposing matter along the waterbottom, mixing it throughout the Basin's water column. Additional tons of

fresh vegetative matter were blown into the waters, increasing and prolonging the oxygen depletion. Fish died by the millions from oxygen starvation.

LDWF biologists estimated that there were nearly 5 million largemouth bass dead and floating in a stench of death in the immense Atchafalaya Basin. When considering other species, a grand total of 182 million freshwater fish were estimated to have been victims of Andrew's wrath.

Management prescriptions were immediately necessary. On the first day of October, 1992, a plan aimed at accelerating the recovery of Basin bass was approved by the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission. Regulations included a 10 bass creel limit and a 14-inch minimum length limit. This would ensure that the remaining Basin bass would spawn, as well as protect the total of 462,218 Florida bass fingerlings and 631,223 native bass that were stocked by the summer of 1993. The management plan also called for increased stocking and sampling occurring with the change in regulations regarding length limits.

By September of 1995, these new management prescriptions were assessed to have worked so wondrously that LDWF biologists could announce that the Basin bass population had recovered. At the time, data analyses, including creel surveys and electrofishing population counts, indicated high catch rates of bass along with an adequate harvest in terms of pounds of fish.

The Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission supported biologists' proposals to extend the limit with the support of many bass anglers. In fact, LDWF creel data collected in 1994 revealed that Basin bass anglers were catching nearly one fish per hour with an average harvest weight of 2.25 pounds!

Later this summer, the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission will again review a proposal to continue the current 14-inch minimum length limit for black bass in the Atchafalaya Basin for an indefinite period. Last April, Commission members viewed a rather comprehensive set of research data compiled in the last six years by LDWF Inland Fisheries biologists. Since these regulations are due to expire

The black bass population is thriving in the Atchafalaya Basin as a result of management efforts by the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and Louisiana bass fishermen.



FIGURE A

This figure graphically displays samples of the increasing population of Basin bass at 14-inches or better. This data is the source of Mike Walker's prediction of even more bass of this size to be in Basin anglers' creels during the summer and fall of 1997.

Figures provided by LDWF

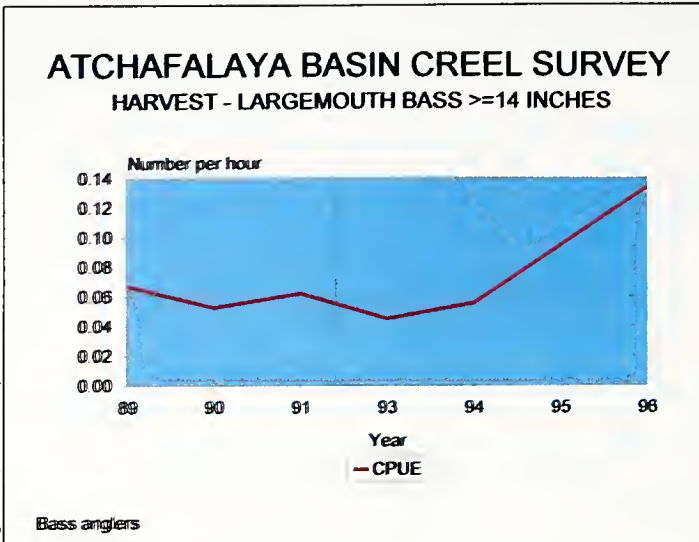
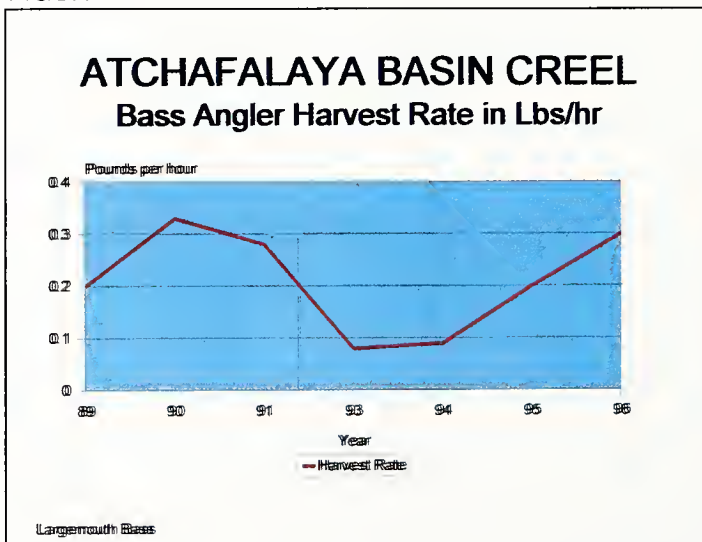


FIGURE B

This figure graphically demonstrates the increased harvest rates of Basin bass in pounds per hour. Note that even with a 14-inch minimum length limit, harvested pounds of bass in post-Andrew years have surpassed pre-Hurricane Andrew rates of 1991 when no length limits and a ten fish creel was in force.



at the end of September, the Commission must now decide whether Basin bass management regulations will remain.

LDWF biologist Mike Walker maintains that biologists' most recent recommendations are due to an analysis of data collected from creel surveys, age and growth analyses, opinion surveys from anglers, and electrofishing monitoring.

"Our creel studies indicate that bass anglers are experiencing a good catch rate of fish, higher than it was prior to the length limit—yet the total pounds of harvested fish has surpassed data collected in creel studies prior to the hurricane," reported Walker.

"What this research is further suggesting is a present harvest rate that's not at all lower than when we fished the Basin with-

out length limit regulations," added the biologist. "In fact the average weight of harvested bass in some samples is nearly double the average weight sampled prior to the hurricane."

Walker backs up his statement with hard facts beginning with samples taken from 1989 to 1991. In those years, the average weights of harvested bass were 1.72, 1.13 and 1.15 pounds respectively, with catch rates of .14, .27 and .23 bass per hour in each successive year.

In contrast, average weights of harvested bass increased with management regulations in the years 1993 through 1996. Sampled weights in these years were 2.09, 2.14, 1.95 and 1.96 pounds, with catch rates of .96 bass per hour—higher than pre-regulation years.

"It appears that we now have a regulated harvest of larger, quality bass that are equal in pounds per hour to a no minimum length regulated harvest of small bass experienced prior to Andrew," claimed Walker. "And this is achieved along with higher catch rates."

Regarding opinion polls, some 2,666 anglers were interviewed regarding the current 14-inch

regulations. Of the 1,532 bass anglers surveyed, some 71 percent favored keeping the current 14-inch length limit intact. Also, 65 percent of all anglers surveyed (including those who fish for various other species) reported favoring the present 14 inch length limit regulations.

"We're also looking at having more bass above 14 inches in anglers' creels this year (1997)," added Walker. "This is based upon our observations of good numbers of bass harvested in the 14- and 15-inch groups from 1994 through 1996. These fish together with the many fingerlings we stocked in the Basin in 1993 should result in many more fish harvested above 14- inches this year."

"We are recommending these regulations for an extended period of time," said Bennie Fontenot, LDWF Inland Fisheries

Administrator. "In fact, we are also advising the Commission not to have these regulations face another sunset period" in contrast to the current September 1997 regulatory date.

According to Fontenot and Walker, other proposals include annual electrofishing samples and continued monitoring of growth rates. Creel surveys will be resumed in three years.

The area covered by the regulations is south of US 190 from the West Atchafalaya Basin Protection Levee to the intersection of La. 1 and US 190 due north of Port Allen, east of the West Atchafalaya Basin Protection Levee from US 190 to US 90, north of US 90 from the West Atchafalaya Basin Protection Levee to La. 20, north and west of La. 20 from US 90 to La. 1 in Thibodaux, south and west of La. 1 from La. 20 to US 190. In addition to the Atchafalaya Basin, bass fisheries in Lake Verret, Lake Palourde and surrounding areas are affected by these regulations.

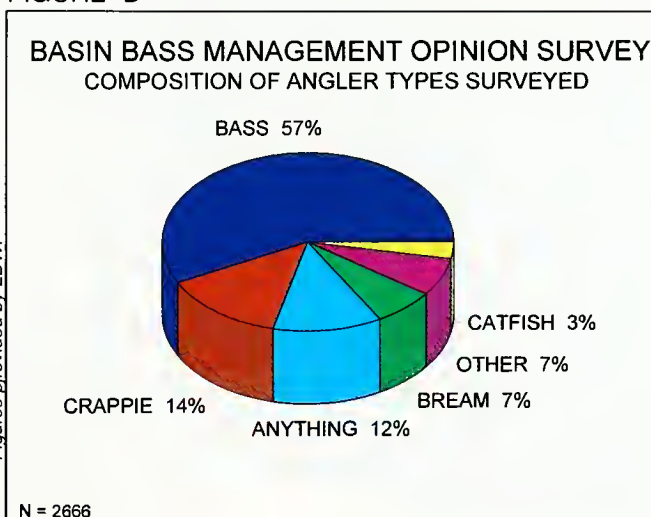
As noted above, the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission will meet this summer to consider final action on LDWF biologists' proposal. For comments or more information, write Mike Walker, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, P. O. Box 98000, Baton Rouge, LA 70898-9000.

This past spring, LDWF biologists presented the results of their research and management actions to anglers present at meetings in locations surrounding the Atchafalaya Basin. The vast majority of anglers present voiced support for continued efforts to manage the black bass population of the Atchafalaya Basin.

FIGURE C



FIGURE D



Figures provided by LDWF

FIGURE E

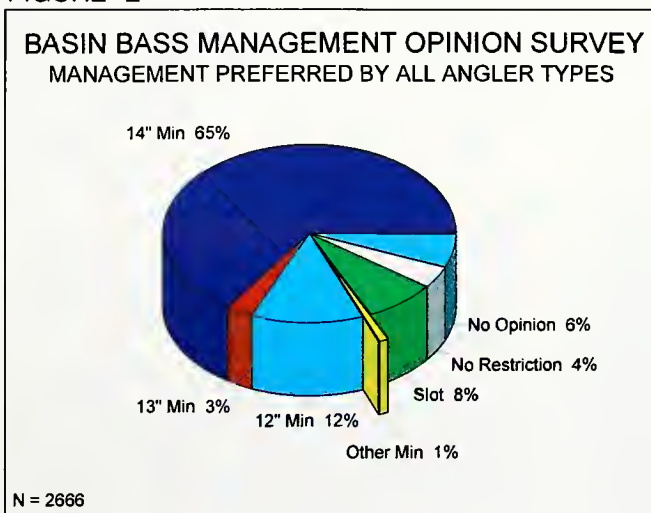
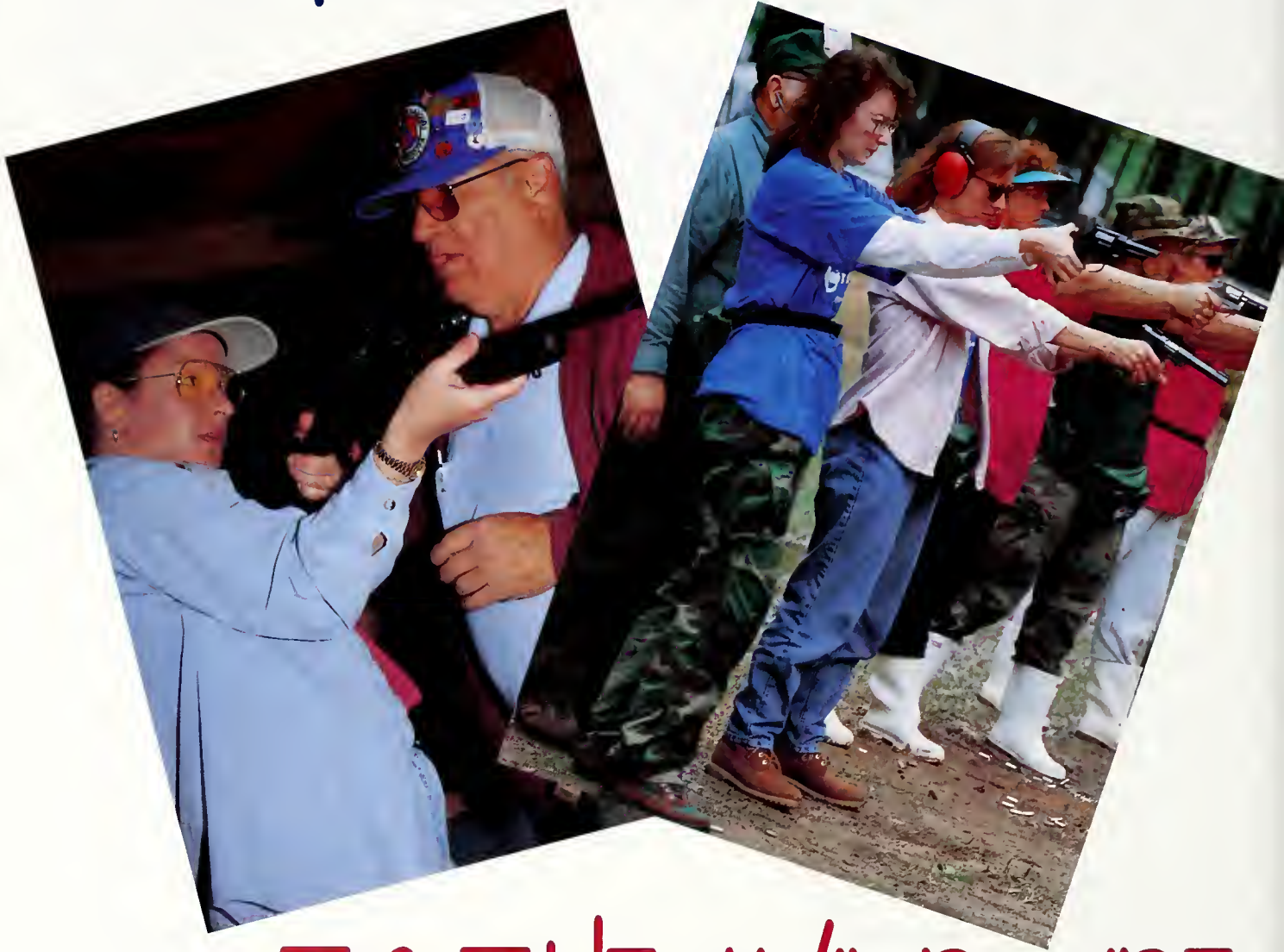


Figure C: In a poll, 2,666 anglers were interviewed regarding the current 14-inch regulations and 1,532 bass anglers favored keeping the current 14-inch length limit intact.

Figure D: This pie chart displays the composition of angler types surveyed at boat landings in the Basin.

Figure E: The survey indicated that the bass management option to keep the 14-inch limit was preferred by 65 percent.

TAKE A WALK...



TO THE WILD SIDE

STORY & PHOTOGRAPHY BY HOLLY BERGERET

*Becoming an
Outdoors-
Woman
workshop
promotes skill
and confidence.*

Mother Nature really knows how to throw a party, and this time it is "girls' night out." Sorry guys, you've garnered her attention long enough. We want a piece of that action.

Growing numbers of kindred female spirits are gathering for long weekends in the woodlands, marshes, mountains and deserts across the country. They're not cults or fitness gurus. They're not man-haters or

subversives. They're your moms, wives, sisters and daughters learning for themselves and becoming competent and confident in the Great Outdoors.

They're doing it together in an effort to discover, master and enjoy the wonder and exhilaration of what their forebears have long understood, embraced and passed down, usually to the next generation of sons.

They are becoming outdoors-women, and they're doing it on their own. I am among them.

It's spring in Louisiana, and we have a doozy of a storm brewing on this April Friday morning as my friend Stephanie and I drive I-10 from Baton Rouge and turn onto I-49 North.

Our destination is Camp Grant Walker 4-H Center in Pollock, LA, about 15 miles northeast of Alexandria. We venture by the Kisatchie National Forest. The terrain turns hilly and the weather foreboding. The sky opens like a broken levee. My wipers whine in a desperate attempt to keep up. "Isn't this nice," I whine right back, hoping the weekend won't be a washout.

I learned about "Becoming an Outdoors-Woman" workshops from a brochure at the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, where I also work. The program began humbly in Wisconsin in 1991, started by Dr. Christine L. Thomas to help other women gain skills and knowledge in hunting, fishing and other outdoor pursuits that have been traditionally male dominated.

A professor of resource management at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, Thomas took part in a 1990 conference of agency and conservation club leaders from around the country. They examined reasons why participation by women in outdoor activities is so low. A list of barriers was generated, along with strategies that could help to break those barriers down.

Of 21 barriers identified, 14 were directly or indirectly related to the fact that women have fewer outdoor opportunities presented to them as children. As adults, they usually must rely on husbands or other male family members to teach them these skills.

The publicity from the study resulted in a number of calls to the university asking if it would be offering hunting and fishing courses for women. The answer was no, but the interest generated led several conference participants to join forces and do something

about it. And so "Becoming an Outdoors-Woman" was born.

"What a great idea," I thought to myself. Like many other women, I would love to try hunting, fishing and other outdoor pursuits but lack the knowledge or resources to even know where to begin. Where else can a woman get hands-on, expert instruction in fly-fishing, 3-D archery, map and compass reading and deer hunting all in the course of one weekend and at a dirt cheap price? The \$125 fee includes meals, accommodations, equipment and instruction in your choice of four of more than 20 subjects.

Despite the deluge, Stephanie and I kept our spirits up and finally pulled into camp. We found the assembly building and checked in. We were greeted warmly, assigned to a bunkhouse and given a welcome gift — a camouflage bag filled with a fanny-pack, t-shirt, coffee mug and other useful items.

Following a brief welcome speech and a ton of door prizes, lunch was served. I took this opportunity to assess what kind of women this seminar attracted. There were 137 of us and there were no absolutes — young and mature, mothers and grandmothers, singles, professionals, and housewives.

This wasn't a macho bunch, nor a passive one. They were decidedly friendly, dressed in rain gear and eager to learn.

After lunch Stephanie and I pulled up to our assigned abode, having indicated on our registration that we preferred the "rowdy" cabin. I selected a bunk and unpacked a bit

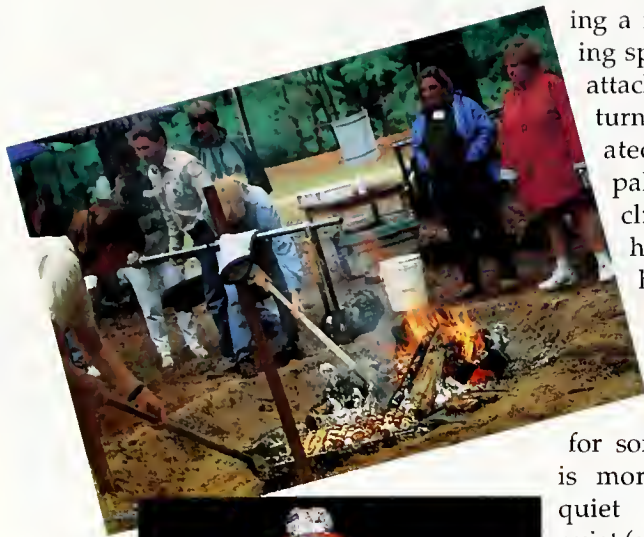
before heading to a work shop on beginning fishing.

Capt. Mary Poe, owner and operator of Big Lake Guide Service in Lake Charles, greeted her charges with wit and worms. She took us through the basics first — what to take, when to go, types of reels, hooks and salt and fresh-water baits. We talked spoons, spinners and minnows. We became familiar with sparkle beetles, bullets, grubs and lead-heads.

We practiced skewering lure after rubber lure till all had mastered the art of maintain-



Tanya Charpentier of Houma was coached in rifle markswomanship by instructor Henry Couvillion (photo at left on page 24). Instructor Walter Denton supervised as participants took aim during a course on handguns (photo at right on page 24). Students learned the basics of selecting a gun, cleaning and storage and shooting technique. Participants in the handgun workshop practiced their shooting skills at Camp Grant Walker's fully operable 15-station range (photo on page 25).



Mimi Methrin of Lafayette and Pat Gadpaille of Shreveport, top photo, tended the fire during a workshop on camp cooking. Lisa Murrell of Shreveport, center photo, showed off shishkabobs prepared, and then devoured, by the class. During a workshop on fishing, these outdoors-women angled for bass at Stewart Lake bottom photo.

ing a naturally appearing sparkle beetle after attaching it to a true-turn hook. We graduated to knots — palomar, square and clinch. These I'll have to practice at home. Finally, we decided to brave the rain and head out to Stewart Lake for some angling. This is more my speed. A quiet afternoon on a quiet (sort of) lake. A few of my cohorts caught and landed bass. Too soon it ended and back to camp we went.

After changing into dry socks, I met Stephanie and headed to the dining hall. All you can eat catfish was on the menu. We compared notes and talked with new friends. I went back for seconds. Eventually, the satisfied crowd filtered out into the assembly hall.

More door prizes.

There's a knife sharpening demonstration and a few brave souls decided to face the darkness and drizzle for the night hike through the forest without benefit of flashlights, led by LDWF educator Cheryl Fischer. Meanwhile, with educator Dana Permenter, we delved into the wonderful world of furbearing mammals as she hosted a great talk on animal skins, skulls and scat.

It was news to me that coyotes still roam wooded patches near residential areas as well the wilds of the state. If you're looking for mink, check the nearest crawfish pond. And if you find one, hide your chickens and rabbits. If you've treed a fox, it must be a gray one as red foxes don't climb trees. And possum don't always play dead. If threatened, they're just as likely to show their teeth and growl.

After awhile we all dispersed to our respective cabins. Many fell asleep easily, while others talked into the wee hours. Saturday morning came early with exercise class at 6:30 (optional of course) and breakfast at 7 a.m.

I began Saturday by sloshing off to beginning bowhunting, held under a wooden shelter. LDWF educator Ricky Yeldell had a wide range of bows on display. He reviewed selection of proper equipment.

He explained the importance of camouflage, how to choose a hunting site and discussed tree stands, shooting techniques, safety, shot placement and tracking. Impressed, I watch as my classmates drew back these taut machines and gracefully let go. Yeldell provided encouragement and honed technique.

Fellow instructor Donna Duplantis smiled and explained what drew her here, originally as a participant and now as a volunteer. "It's fun," she said. "Even with the rain, this is great. This is such a unique experience for a lot of women. Some of them have never been exposed to things their fathers and husbands have been doing all their lives and they weren't welcome to join in. This gives them a beginning and the confidence to try new things."

I caught up with the overnight backpackers who were returning from a night in the woods of Kisatchie National Forest. Christel Dawkins was upbeat. "The hike was really nice. The weather was terrible. I didn't have enough stakes for my tent and it was rockin' and rollin' all night. I could hear things falling all around me and I wondered if a tree would fall on us," she said with a laugh.

Kim Broussard chimed in, "People that attend these functions are true sportswomen. They take the bad with the good. We did it.



You challenge yourself and learn teamwork. That's what it's about."

Leader of the pack was Mike Burns, an instructor at the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service. He attested to their fortitude, stating, "If it had been a bunch of guys, they'd be complaining and moaning. It was raining when we left and it didn't quit till four in the morning. There's a camaraderie among the women. It's educating."

Basic camp cooking was in full swing at the far end of the camp and my timing couldn't have been better. A virtual feast was being prepared — bear stew, deer roast, chili, baked apples with cinnamon, chicken, sausage and mushroom kabobs. There were pineapple and shrimp kabobs and more.

Instructor Judy Galatis graciously



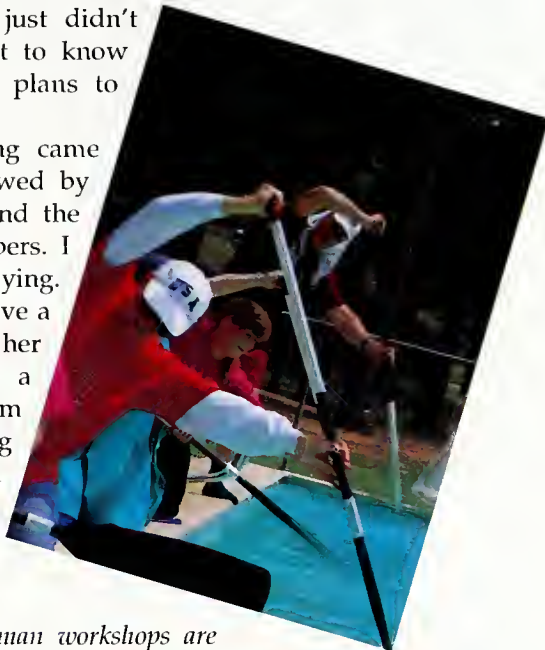
offered a bowl of chili and said, "It's all hands-on. We did it with the rain, lightning and thunder, just like real camping. We teach how to build a fire safely, first aid, the importance of a fire line and demonstrate how easy the various cooking methods really are."

Throughout the day, I sat in on a variety of workshops, wandering from rifle markswomanship to basic camping skills, from bird watching to canoeing. I kept noticing the interest in women's faces and the fun they were having despite the rain, while learning new skills.

As evening neared the atmosphere was lively, yet relaxed. A genuine crawfish boil got underway. The sky held as a hungry and appreciative crowd dug into the mudbugs. Everyone mingled and discussed the day. A fashion show followed, featuring good natured volunteers who modeled outdoor wear and clowned for the cheering crowd.

Special entertainment was provided by "Tina Terrebonne and her Down the Bayou Girls," who performed a unique rendition of "Proud Mary." They were a definite hit. Socializing continued until we all realized that one weekend just didn't seem long enough to get to know each other. Many made plans to return in September.

With Sunday morning came our last workshop, followed by lunch, a group picture and the exchange of phone numbers. I thought about an old saying. How does it go? If you give a woman a fish, you'll feed her for a day. If you teach a woman *how* to fish ... mmm ... she just might bring home the next record bass? Yeah, that's it. 🐟



LDWF Biologist Les Johnson taught students the various stroking methods before they took to the canoes.

Becoming an Outdoors-Woman workshops are now active in 43 states and eight Canadian provinces. The event is held twice a year in Louisiana and sponsored by the Information and Education Division of LDWF, local and national conservation agencies and outdoor organizations. The next workshop will be held Sept. 19-21. For more information call 504/765-2916.

Virginia Rettig of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service led a hike through Camp Grant Walker while hosting a workshop on birdwatching.



Donna Duplantis demonstrates correct form during a course on the fast growing sport of bowhunting.

WISCONSIN FISH

Alford, Barry G.	Houma	Caire, Matthew T.	Luling
Baker, Robert B.	Shreveport	Click, Dean F., Jr.	Houma
Bauer, Jason P.	Vivian	Coullard, Glenn Jr.	Baton Rouge
Blencke, Charles	Baton Rouge	Desallte, Rickey J.	Reserve
Brooks, David D.	Shreveport	Donnelly, Travis J.	Chalmette
Broussard, Billy P.	Kaplan	Dufrene, Jacob T.	Raceland
Bryant, Stafford L.	Haughton	Etzel, Ethan T.	West Monroe
Champagne, Paul	LaPlace	Fletcher, Brandon	Springfield
Charlet, Brent J.	Zachary	Fontenot, Douglas	Ville Platte
Circello, Casey B.	Livonia	Fontenot, Matthew	Jeanerette
Circello, Cody B.	Livonia	Gallo, Louis A.	LaPlace
Circello, William R.	Livonia	Gosnell, Rob	Vinton
Cole, Dustin J.	Lake Charles	Graham, Jonathan	Walker
Duckworth, Bill J.	Epps	Griffin, Emil P.	DeRidder
Duplessis, Matthew	Greenwell Spgs	Griffin, Thomas E.	DeRidder
Ellender, Robert M.	Terrytown	Hanks, J.B.	Baton Rouge
Foco, Kenny L.	Jeanerette	Haun, George, Jr.	Baton Rouge
Fontenot, Richard	Lafayette	Henry, Dustin J.	Sulphur
George, Jackie, Jr.	Eunice	Hodges, James D.	Baker
Gilbert, Donald L.	New Orleans	Hodson, Austin, S.	Raceland
Gornak, Michael E.	Covington	Holbrook, Robert	St. Gabriel
Harris, Patrick F.	Denham Springs	Irby, Mathieu K.	Baton Rouge
Hoag, Christopher	Welsh	Irby, Merrell C.	Baton Rouge
Hollingshead, Kevin	Slidell	Irby, Michael B.	Baton Rouge
Hotard, Kenneth P.	Breaux Bridge	Jeansonne, Brent	Zachary
Ivins, Alex R., Jr.	Vivian	Jones, Donald	Bossier City
Juneau, Courtney	Lafayette	Jones, Lisa	Pearl River
Lambert, Jake D.	St. Amant	Landry, Norvel	Destrehan
LeBlanc, Seth M.	Kentwood	Mahl, Brandon A.	Metairie
Lincoln, Christopher	Buras	McCarver, Joseph	Bastrop
Long, Jeffrey T.	Baton Rouge	Meyer, Matthew J.	New Orleans
Madden, Jared F.	Saline	Mistretta, Bryan F.	Donaldsonville
Mills, Joel R.	Elm Grove	Monteith, John K., Jr.	Sulphur
Musso, David A.	Baton Rouge	Murphy, Christopher L.	Shreveport
Neely, Zachary H.	Eunice	Peyton, Burt L.	Benton
Noel, Christopher G.	Opelousas	Peyton, Pamela A.	Benton
Pellerin, Gilbert P., Sr.	New Iberia	Picou, Rudolph P.	Lafayette
Priest, John C., Sr.	Ruston	Reid, Ryan T.	Vivian
Redd, O. Paul	Baker	Roberts, Troy W.	Eros
Regard, William L.	New Iberia	Robinson, Charles W.	Shreveport
Reneau, Justin	Monroe	Rohde, Edward L., Jr.	Chalmette
Robertson, Johnny	Independence	Sapia, Willard J.	Westwego
Smith, Randall H.	Sterlington	Savoie, Brice M.	Cutoff
Stelly, Roger D.	Lake Charles	Savoie, Ferrell J.	Westwego
Tarver, Albert L.	Ferriday	Seeliger, Jeffrey C.	Denham Springs
Thomas, Justin K.	Calhoun	Seibert, William C.	Baton Rouge
Traugott, William	Slidell	Sevin, Robert J., Jr.	Carencro
Venseret, Jason	Denham Springs	Smith, David B.	Baton Rouge
Webb, Renick P.	Alexandria	Smith, Roger G.	Lafayette
Webb, Emile J., III	Luling	Stuckey, Jonathan B.	Baton Rouge
Whittington, Matthew	Sulphur	Thomas, Robert W.	Lake Charles
Babin, Cody, R.	Gonzales	Tonione, Joshua K.	Mansfield
Bailey, Byron T.	Calhoun	Torres, Adam C.	Maringouin
Barron, Jared T.	Spearsville	Touchet, Shaun P.	Sulphur
Bamgartner, Robert	Abita Springs	Toups, Raylee P.	Raceland
Benoist, Mary T.	Baton Rouge	Valentine, Joel C.	Gonzales
Beyer, Gregory R.	Baton Rouge	Vreeland, Robert C.	Kaplan
Bishop, Michelle A.	Jeanerette	Ware, Joey M.	Brusly
Boening, Brent M.	Gretna	Wilson, Barry C.	Grand Chenier
Bourgeois, Chase	Jeanerette	Woods, Kerry C.	Baton Rouge

LOUISIANA NATURE INVESTIGATOR

BY AMY OUCHLEY AND GAY BRANTLEY

SIGHTS AND SOUNDS OF THE NIGHT

The night can be a fearful place until you get to know it. Learning the source of mysterious night sounds can lead to some of your best discoveries.

Almost any night in Louisiana is full of noises. What animals create these sounds? Where are they located? How do animals make their night music? Why?

Follow these simple instructions to imitate a few night sounds. Then step outside after dark and listen. If you live near water or trees, you should hear at least one of these sounds.

See if you can match the sound with the animal. Draw a line to the correct one.



Leopard frog



Toad



Great Horned Owl



Bullfrog



Cicada

1. Rub on an inflated balloon.
2. Click two small rocks together.
3. Hold your nose and say, "waah."
4. Rub your finger across the teeth of a comb (preferably an old comb) to make a rasping trill.
5. Drone these words in a deep voice, "Brrr... whoom ... Brrr ... whoom."
6. Say, "Who cooks for you? Who cooks for you all ...?"
7. Whinny like a horse.
8. In a low, soft voice say, "Whoo, Whoo, Whooo..."
9. Say this in a monotone (do not raise or lower your voice), "Katy did, Katy didn't, Katy did, Katy didn't."
10. Hum in two different tones. Take a deep breath and repeat each hum for several seconds, one after the other.



Barred owl



Cricket frog



Screech owl



Katydid



Chorus frog

CONGRATULATIONS! You've created the sounds of 10 different animals. Several of these sounds are made by **amphibians**. Amphibians, like frogs and toads, live near water or damp places.

Leopard frogs (#1.) make this sound by inflating two pouches that look like small balloons on either side of their heads. Leopard frogs have splotchy skin and that's where they get their name.

Another smaller frog (the size of a quarter), the cricket frog (#2.), makes a clicking sound like the rocks. You may hear cricket frogs calling from any source of water near your home.

Sound (#3.) comes from an animal you might find in your yard, the toad. The toad has dry, bumpy skin, but will not give you warts. Toads are beneficial animals to have around. Find out what toads eat to discover why they make good neighbors.

Chorus frogs (#4.) usually sing in groups and that's where they get their name. You may hear chorus frogs calling from a nearby ditch, but they are very hard to find.

Louisiana's largest frog is the bullfrog (#5.). Bullfrogs call while floating at the surface of the water and like other frogs and toads vocalize to attract mates.

Several kinds of owls live in Louisiana and make a variety of sounds. Barred owls (#6.) live near **swamps** or other types of wetlands. Sometimes they are heard calling to each other. Louisiana's smallest owl is the screech owl (#7.) and its whinny may be heard at **dusk** near the edge of a forest. The largest owl, the great horned owl (#8.), hoots softly high in the trees. All owls are **predators**. Can you think of some other animals active at night that these owls might catch and eat?

Some insects are noisy creatures at night. Insect (#9.), the katydid, has a green body and wings and repeats its name. Insect (#10.) crawls out of the earth and sheds its **exoskeleton** in the summer. You may find the empty, brown coverings of cicadas attached to trees. The cicada climbs high to drone all summer.

DOES NIGHT'S DARKNESS FRIGHTEN YOU?

There are special cells in your eyes that will help you see when there is not much light. These cells are called **rods**.

It takes several minutes for your eyes to **adapt** (or to get used to) the darkness. Step outside at night and do **not** look at a light source. Soon you will begin to see the shapes of objects in the darkness. Notice that you do not see color, because different cells called **cones** detect color and they work better in brighter light.

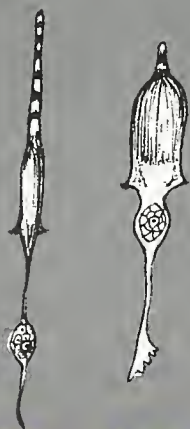
Some animals make their own light to communicate in the dark. Light created by living organisms is called **bioluminescence**. The flashing of a firefly is an example. An interesting feature of this biological light is that it does not produce heat like other forms of light, such as a light bulb.

You can produce a light similar to a firefly's with wintergreen Lifesavers candy. Try cracking the candy with a pair of pliers in a dark room. The blue-green glow comes from a chemical reaction produced by the force of the pliers on the sugar **molecules** in the candy. The firefly's flashing is also the result of a chemical reaction and is a signal between the male and female insects.

Now that you know more about the night, don't be afraid to explore it close to home. For a better look at the frogs found in Louisiana, ask your teacher or school librarian to order the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries poster illustrating "Amphibians". Or you can find more information in field guides to reptiles and amphibians, insects, or birds at your local library. Check out the next "Louisiana Nature Investigator" to discover what lives on the walls and floors of the forest.



Firefly



Rod

Cone

GLOSSARY

dusk - the beginning of darkness in the evening.

exoskeleton - skeleton covering the outside of the body.

predator - an animal that kills and eats other animals.

molecule - the smallest particle of a substance made by a combination of atoms.

swamp - a low, wet, forested area.

LAW LINES

Behind the Badge

BY MAJ. KEITH LACAZE

Special Units of the Enforcement
Division: Covert Operations

Occasionally in this column and in news releases from the Enforcement Division, special units or sections within the division are mentioned. While all efforts within the division are focused on enforcement of wildlife, fisheries and boating regulations, the diversity and complexity of the law requires that some specialization in certain areas occurs.

Today we have at least five units or sections that focus their attention on one particular set of rules and regulations or are experts in certain law enforcement methods. Salt Water Enforcement Patrol, Oyster Strike Force, Special Investigations Unit (Seafood Industry), Boating Safety and the Covert Section are active specialized units with specific missions and responsibilities.

Without a doubt the most mysterious and least discussed among these is the Covert Operations Unit (COU). For obvious reasons the investigative methods and capabilities of this small section must remain undisclosed to everyone but the unit members and their supervisors. But an overview of the unit and the effectiveness of successful covert operations should be of interest to everyone and will not compromise the unit or any current or future operation.

The COU has always been a small unit for two reasons. Less people mean less likelihood of confidential information leaks. Confidentiality is absolutely vital to an undercover operation both for officer safety and success of the investigation. Recruitment for the unit is very difficult since few have the desire and the ability to do covert work. Not many are willing to spend so much time working alone, at high risk and in the company of people who desperately need to be arrested.

Stress for an undercover officer can be

unimaginably high. An invitation to go out on the water or into the backwoods with a poacher may be a break in the case or an appointment with death. The undercover agent never knows for sure whether his cover is still intact or if his true identity has been discovered. Sophisticated outlaws will frequently go to great lengths to verify the true identity of any newcomer in their social group. The discovery that the newcomer is not who he or she claims to be can have serious implications for the undercover agent.

Total acceptance into a group can bring about a whole new set of problems. An invitation to the camp or for an overnight stay most likely means a long sleepless night for the undercover agent while the suspects snore away in peaceful bliss. The officer may have to politely decline offers of drugs or alcohol and even unwarranted romantic interest, all without causing suspicion.

An undercover agent has to carefully avoid becoming too involved with the suspects he is working. Immersing one's self deeply in a cover can bring on stresses the officer never anticipated. The loose and easy lifestyle of some outlaws can be quite attractive and the undercover can begin to simply like it too much.

Many of the poachers are not altogether bad people. Trust and friendship often develops between outlaw and undercover lawman. Betraying that trust and friendship is a foregone conclusion at the end of every case. The betrayal and subsequent facing of the former friend in court to convict him can bring on overwhelming guilt and low self esteem.

It is therefore essential that the undercover agent maintain constant communication with his supervisor and fellow officers in order to maintain the proper perspective and to remember that he is not alone. Covert operations are directed primarily at illegal commercial trade in wildlife. In Louisiana illegal wildlife trade is mainly in game fish, wild venison and waterfowl. There is some trade in small game in a few areas of the state. Illegal sales of game fish have been the most serious problem, with organized groups operating on a scale large enough to involve shipments of thousands of pounds of crappie into places as far away as Chicago (Operation Silverhook). Illegal operations can also be as small as a single individual selling his catch to friends and neighbors.

Undercover agents have also been

effective in detecting illegal activity in the commercial seafood industry. Posing as unlicensed fishermen selling illegal seafood, covert agents found a startling number of restaurants willing to buy illegal fish as long as the price was right (Operation Bon Appetit).

Another phase of covert work involves undercover agents assisting uniform officers in catching particularly clever and elusive outlaws. As much as we hate to admit it, some game thieves are just too cautious and too smart. Their illegal activities can go on for years with uniformed agents just a step or two behind, but never quite close enough. An agent posing as another poacher can sometimes get close enough to gather information which allows uniformed officers to get within striking distance.

Undercover operations reap great rewards but at a high cost to the men who do the work. They often find themselves adrift somewhere between their fellow lawmen and the outlaws. Some are recruited straight out of the academy and are separated from the rest of the division during their entire tour in the unit. The camaraderie enjoyed by the uniformed ranks is denied them.

Covert officers spend a lot of time on the road traveling from case to case. An undercover agent was asked during an interview once to describe what it was like to work undercover. He said, "Well, you eat a lot of hamburgers." They are also experts on hotel accommodations and backwoods bars.

Due to the difficulties and challenges of the work, most officers only last two to three years in the unit before returning to uniform. By that time they are beginning to run the risk of being recognized and have usually had enough of the harsh demands of undercover work. There are some rare exceptions, officers who thrive on outsmarting the bad ones and shutting down large scale illicit operators. They remain in the unit for years and train and educate the younger undercover agent in how to succeed and survive.

Covert operations are absolutely essential to wildlife law enforcement. Undercover work is not the answer to every poaching problem, but it is at times the only effective solution to a serious threat to our wildlife resources.

In future issues we will explore some of the other special units of the Enforcement Division and their part in the overall plan for resource protection.

notes

CONSERVATION

Jenkins Presents Commemorative Knife to Gov. Foster

Wildlife and Fisheries Secretary James Jenkins Jr. recently presented Gov. M.J. "Mike" Foster Jr. with a handmade commemorative knife celebrating the 75th anniversary of the *Louisiana Conservationist* magazine. Jenkins presented knife number one of the limited edition, fixed blade series at an informal meeting on May 29 at the Governor's office in the mansion.

Noted knife-maker Mike Sanders, commissioned by the Louisiana Conservationist to handcraft the specially designed knife, was also in attendance.

Secretary Jenkins stated, "The *Louisiana Conservationist* magazine

is celebrating its 75th year of continuous publication. It has now reached financial self-sufficiency through the sale of quality items such as the commemorative knife. In a gesture of appreciation for his support of the Department and the magazine, we are proud to present knife number one to the Governor."

The Louisiana Conservationist magazine has chronicled the Sportsman's Paradise through written word and photographs since January 1923. The magazine continues to explore the role of LDWF in conserving Louisiana's abundant natural resources.

More Than \$7 Million in Federal Funds to be Secured by LDWF

Nearly \$7.5 million in federal money has been apportioned for Louisiana's 1997-98 fiscal year to fund wildlife and fisheries management, research, hunter and aquatic education and boater access. The funds are generated from the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration and the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration programs.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service disburses the funds annually to each

state according to license sales and state size. Hunters and fishermen nationwide pay an excise tax collected at the manufacturers' level on sporting equipment and the money generated is funneled into the programs.

The Department of Wildlife and Fisheries anticipates receiving \$4,594,403 in Sport Fish Restoration funds and is slated to receive \$2,871,539 in Wildlife Restoration funds.

First Spawning a Major Success

Nearly one million Florida largemouth bass were hatched in the first spawning at the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries' new Booker Fowler Fish Hatchery.

The \$13 million facility, located near Woodworth in southern Rapides Parish, is designated as the state's primary freshwater fish rearing facility. It provides a nursery for Florida largemouth bass, blue, channel and flathead catfish, paddlefish, Gulf sturgeon and other species.

Biologists attribute this first successful spawning to a new technique called "Intensive Culture." Nests are removed after spawning and transferred to indoor troughs to hatch. The fry are then seined and placed in rearing ponds. These techniques eliminate parental and other carnivorous predation. When the fry reach one and a half inches in length, they are harvested to stock Louisiana's quality and trophy lakes and other designated public waterbodies.

Boy Scouts Present Plaque of Appreciation to LDWF

The Department of Wildlife and Fisheries' "devoted and untiring work" with disadvantaged youths at the Waddill Urban Wildlife Refuge was recognized by the Istrouma Area Council of the Boy Scouts of America.

Scout Master Ray Bates presented a plaque of recognition to LDWF Wildlife Specialist Supervisor Manuel Ruiz and Specialist Mike Hollier April 29 at the wildlife refuge in Baton Rouge.



Louisiana Gov. Mike Foster Jr. (middle) accepts the first *Louisiana Conservationist* magazine commemorative knife from James Jenkins, Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Secretary (right). Knife-maker, Mike Sanders (left) was also in attendance.

The Department was recognized for providing facilities for Spring Field Days for youths with disabilities. This is part of the Council's Operation First Class, a major at-risk youth initiative. The aim of the Operation is to provide encouragement, living skills and leadership training and to develop self-esteem in at-risk youth.

The 237-acre Waddill Urban Wildlife Refuge is located in Baton Rouge on Flannery Road adjacent to the Comite River. LDWF is transforming the property into a recreation and education complex.

Enforcement Agent Retires after 34 Years of Service

James Orlando Nunez retired after 34 years of service with the Department at the Rockefeller Refuge. Nunez began working for the Department in 1962 as a laborer. In 1966 he was promoted to Wildlife Refuge Warden and served 30 years of uninterrupted law enforcement service. While Nunez is well known for this enforcement career accomplishments, he also aided many a student who began their career at Rockefeller, worked hand-in-hand with the biologist staff

and provided valuable assistance to the Rockefeller Refuge shop and field crews. Nunez was awarded the Safari Club International Wildlife Officer of the Year Award in 1974.

Reminder

LCM Calendar Becomes Yearly

Editor Marianne Marsh reminds readers that the *Louisiana Conservationist* calendar will be published as the January/February issue of the magazine. Previously, the calendar was published in July and ran from September to August. The new format will run from January to December.

Study Shows Economic Impacts of Fish, Wildlife Enormous

A new study shows that the economic impact of fisheries, wildlife and boating resources in Louisiana totals more than \$8.7 billion.

That figure represents the total economic or "ripple" effect of retailer, manufacturer and others' expenditures.

Wildlife, fisheries and boating also support more than \$5 billion in retail sales, 93,500 jobs, more than \$2 billion in salaries and wages and more

than \$260 million in state tax revenues.

Some of the study's findings are as follows. *Hunting*: \$389.2 million in retail sales, \$758.5 million in total economic effect, \$20.8 million in tax revenues and 9,800 jobs. *Recreational fishing*: \$790 million in retail sales, \$1.6 billion in total economic effect, \$38.5 million in tax revenues and 18,400 jobs. *Commercial fishing*: \$2.1 billion in retail sales, \$2.8 billion in total economic effect, \$107 million in tax revenues and 31,400 jobs. *Non-consumptive fish and wildlife recreation*: \$253.3 million in retail sales, \$512.3 in total economic effect, \$21 million in tax revenues and 6,800 jobs.

1996 Boating Deaths at Record Low

Nationwide boating fatalities dropped to an all-time low of 714 deaths in 1996.

The results of a preliminary survey by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) member states indicate that the number of boating deaths nationally in 1996 showed a 13 percent decline since 1995 when there were 818 casualties. Louisiana had 41 deaths as a result of boating accidents in 1996.

NASBLA's survey showed that non-fatal accidents are also down. There were 4,589 non-fatal boating accidents reported to authorities in 1996, compared to 4,954 in 1995. Louisiana had about 123 injuries in 1996.

Find out if there's a Boating Education class near you. Call Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Boating Education Coordinator Bob Johnson at 318/484-2251.

Louisiana Conservationist Helps Find Kids

Missing: Taranika Raymond. DOB: 7/6/82. Missing from New Orleans. Sex: female. Race: black. Height: 5'3". Hair: black. Eyes: brown. Anyone knowing the whereabouts of this child should call the New Orleans Police Department at 504/826-1265 or the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children at 800/843-5678.



Photo by Barry Wilson

Retiring Conservation Officer James Nunez and friends. Standing (left to right): Sr. Agent Kirby Henry, Sr. Agent. Errol Campbell, Conservation Officer Remy Broussard, Conservation Officer James Nunez, Col. Winton Vidrine, Conservation Officer Irvin "Junior" Vaughn, Capt. Chad Manuel and Lt. Glenn Angelle. Kneeling (left to right): Maj. Keith LaCaze, Sr. Agent Marty Lormand and Sgt. Edwin Broussard.

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WC

Bayou Kitchen



Fish Casserole

- Bass fillets (cover bottom of flat 2-quart casserole)**
- 2 cans shrimp soup**
 - 1 small can shrimp**
 - Milk to cover fish**
 - 1 can sliced mushrooms**
 - Flour**
 - Juice of one lemon**
 - 1 stick butter**
 - 1/2 cup milk**
 - 1 bell pepper, minced**
 - Salt**
 - 1/4 cup celery, minced**
 - Red pepper**
 - 1 tablespoon green onions, minced**
 - Worcestershire sauce**
 - 1 tablespoon parsley, minced**

Soak fillets in milk 2 to 3 hours. Dip in flour and brown in butter. Place in baking dish. Saute bell pepper, celery, parsley and green onions in butter until limp. Add soup, shrimp, mushrooms, lemon juice, milk and season-

ings to taste. Pour over fillets and bake at 350 degrees for 30 to 40 minutes. Serves 6.

Stuffed Fillets of Bass

- 4 largemouth bass, 1 1/2 to 2 pounds each, filleted and skinned**
- salt and pepper**
- 1 egg, beaten**
- 1 tablespoon butter**
- flour**
- 1/4 cut finely minced onion**
- 1 egg yolk, beaten**
- 4 slices stale bread**
- 1/2 cup fine, dry bread crumbs**
- 1/2 cup milk**
- oil for deep frying**
- 1/4 teaspoon thyme**

Wipe the fillets with a damp cloth. Melt the butter and cook the onion until translucent. Soak the bread in the milk until soft and squeeze dry, rubbing and crumbling the bread with your hands. Mix the bread with

the onion, add seasonings, and mix with the beaten egg to bind. Dividing the mixture evenly, spread it over the fillets and roll up paupiette fashion, fastening with a toothpick. Dust the rolls with flour, dip in beaten egg yolk, and roll in the bread crumbs. Arrange in deep-fry basket (if available) and plunge into hot fat. Fry until golden brown all over. Remove toothpicks before serving. Serve with tomato sauce. Yields 8 paupiettes.

Bream Dip

Steam fillets of bream and cool. Mash very fine. Add:

Lea & Perrins sauce.
garlic powder
dash of liquid smoke
lemon
salt and pepper to taste
mayonnaise

Amount of seasonings will depend on amount of fish.

